LIBERATION FROM SLAVERY IN EARLY CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of the School of Theology

Claremont, California

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Religion

by

John Richard Mahon

June 1974

This dissertation, written by

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*under the direction of_____Faculty Committee,
and approved by its members, has been presented
to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of
Theology at Claremont in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of*

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Date _May 14, 1974_

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PREFACE

One of the most important difficulties facing the church in America during the Seventies is the radical separation of Biblical studies and theological ethics. This division has had a profound effect upon the mission of the church, particularly in the area of political and social involvement. It has led in part to the present retrenchment in the mission field, as is also evidenced by the consequences of the "Angela Davis affair" in my own denomination. This study aims to be a part of a beginning in which theological ethics and Biblical studies may again be reunited. It is hoped that as a result the mission of the church will be strengthened.

My sincere thanks are offered to the members of my doctoral committee, Dr. Hans Dieter Betz, chairman, and Dr. Joseph C. Hough, Jr., for their suggestions and critical comments. Gratitude is also due to Dr. Ekkehard Muehlenberg who graciously gave his time in helping to clarify my theological thinking. Michael B. Fiske suggested critical comments, for which I am grateful.

Most importantly, thanks is extended to my wife, Peggy, for her patience and support. Together we humbly dedicate this essay to the memory of our friend, Larry E. McKinney, who knew in the Spirit the meaning of Christian freedom for social ethics.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Liberation is a popular term that is used today to describe political struggle between two or more social units which are unequal in terms of power. It implies a positive normative valuation for the unit with less power. The word is employed particularly in reference to the revolutionary movements in the Third World and to the racial and sexual minorities within the United States. Liberation has also found its way into theological vocabulary. It has done so in recent theological analysis and reflection upon the present political situation.[1] It has also been used in recent interpretations of the Biblical tradition.[2]

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[1]James H. Cone, A Black Theology of Liberation (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1970); Gustavo Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis Books, 1973); Rosemary Ruether, Liberation Theology (New York: Paulist Press, 1972); Dorothee Sölle, "The Role of Political Theology in Relation to the Liberation of Men," in James M. Robinson (ed.) Religion and the Humanizing of Man (Waterloo, Ontario: Council on the Study of Religion, 1972); John M. Swomiley, Jr., Liberation Ethics (New York: Macmillan, 1972).

[2]Frederick Herzog, Liberation Theology (New York: Seabury Press, 1972); Ernst Käsemann, Jesus Means Freedom (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969); Jürgen Moltmann, "Toward a Political Hermeneutic of the Gospel," in New Theology No. 6 (New York: Macmillan, 1969); Hans Walter Wolff, "Masters and Slaves: On Overcoming the Class-Struggle in the Old Testament," Interpretation, XXVII (1973), 259-272.

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Most of these Biblical studies have centered upon the concept of freedom as the basis for the use of the word liberation. This choice of freedom is complicated by the fact that there are a variety of motifs in the Bible. As a result, many of these studies have selected motifs of freedom that have more easily adapted themselves to interpretation, such as the Exodus tradition, the proclamation of the prophets, or the pericope where Jesus is seen as a liberator of the poor. There are, however, several critical points in the Biblical record which do not as easily lend themselves to liberation. One of these points is the relationship of Christian freedom and slavery in early Christian experience. Investigation of that relationship will be undertaken in this essay.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Before this study is delineated, consideration should be given to the meaning of the past for the present. After all, why is the Bible, a collection of documents from antiquity, used as a source for decision-making in social ethics?[3] This hermeneutical concern has been seen by

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[3]James M. Gustafson, "The Relevance of Historical Understanding," in Toward a Discipline of Social Ethics (Boston: Boston University Press, 1972), pp. 49-70.

D. Moody Smith[4] as not a critical question for the American church, since the scope of the Biblical authority, not its legitimacy, is the present frame of the question. However, the problem about the scope of authority necessarily raises criticism of the legitimacy of that source. Therefore, it seems that the hermeneutical question is involved in theological discussion in the United States.

In order to examine the hermeneutical question, an understanding of history must be presupposed. R. G. Collingwood has defined history as scientific research that aims to discover events that happened in the past in order that a complete knowledge of human experience may be attained.[5] According to him, the methodology of history is the interpretation of evidence, and, as such, it involves the participation of the historian as he re-enacts the past in his mind. The involvement of the historian does not mean a regression into subjectivism. On the contrary, it signifies the objectivity of history, in that meaning and

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[4]D. Moody Smith, "Political Responsibility Amid Violence and Revolution: A Challenge to Biblical Authority," Duke Divinity School Bulletin, XXXVI (1971), 166-167.

[5]Robin George Collingwood, The Idea of History (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), pp. 9-10, 205-231.

fact are not separated from one another.[6] Past events are meaningful for the present, because, as Rudolf Bultmann has pointed out, to be human means to be an historic being.[7] This definition of humanity assumes a connection between the past and the present.

This link between past and present is the crucial question in an understanding of history. Bultmann has defined the connection by the category, understanding of existence. In opposition to his definition is the delineation by Wolfhart Pannenberg who understands the connection in terms of the totality of history.[8] However, neither of these positions is entirely satisfactory. Pannenberg's position includes a theonomous world-view that is not

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[6]It is at this point that Rudolf Bultmann, History and Eschatology (New York: Harper & Row, 1957) and Wolfhart Pannenberg, "The Revelation of God in Jesus Christ," in James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr., New Frontiers in Theology (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), III, 101-134, part in their interpretation of Collingwood. Bultmann wants to maintain the paradox of meaning and fact in history, while Pannenberg attacks this dualism as out-dated; James M. Robinson, "Revelation as Word and History," in Robinson and Cobb, III, 21-30.

[7]Rudolf Bultmann, "A Chapter in the Problem of Demythologizing," in New Testament Sidelights (Hartford: Hartford Seminary Foundation Press, 1960), p. 5.

[8]Jürgen Moltmann, "The Understanding of History in Christian Social Ethics," in his Hope and Planning (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 101-129, has a similar view to that of Pannenberg; Robinson, "Revelation as Word and as History," III, 21-30.

convincing in the present cultural situation,[9] while
Bultmann's has tended in usage towards individualization.[10]
Since this question remains unresolved, for the purposes of
this essay, the link will be temporarily understood in terms
of understanding of world.[11]

The problem with which this discussion began, namely
the normativeness of the Bible, still remains. This problem
may be solved in a preliminary way by defining for whom it
is normative. The Bible is a source for ethical criteria
only for those who in faith recognize it as such. In other
words, it is normative for Christians. As Paul Lehmann has
defined it, Christian ethics is ". . . the reflection upon
the question, and its answer: What am I, a believer in
Jesus Christ, and as a member of his church, to do?"[12] In
order to answer that question, the past must be considered,
if for no other reason than to determine one's historical
faithfulness to the original witness of Jesus Christ. More-
over, as a member of the church, the Christian can not

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[9]William Hamilton, "The Character of Pannenberg's
Theology," in Robinson and Cobb, III, 186-187.

[10]Jürgen Moltmann, "Exegesis and the Eschatology of
History," in his Hope and Planning, pp. 64-66.

[11]James M. Robinson, "World in Modern Theology and
in New Testament Theology," in Soli Deo Gloria (Richmond:
John Knox Press, 1968), pp. 88-110, 149-151.

[12]Paul L. Lehmann, Ethics in a Christian Context
(New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 25.

escape the past, because it is part of the internal history of the community of faith.[13]

THE PROBLEM

Given this precursory understanding of the relevance of the past for the present, attention should return to the problem of this study, slavery in early Christian experience. Investigation of this question uncovers a major difficulty in interpretation for today. Did Christian freedom in any way affect the position of the slave in society? Many historians have concluded that it clearly did not.[14] This answer has been readily accepted, due in part to the fact that it is the perspective of Augustine,[15] Luther,[16] and Calvin.[17] However, as Krister Stendahl has pointed out in reference to Paul and the concept of

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[13]H. Richard Niebuhr, The Meaning of Revelation (New York: Macmillan, 1941), p. 66.

[14]In fact, agreement on this point was reached by Christian and Marxist scholarship for the early church, particularly Paul. Cf. Albert Schweitzer, The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle (London: Black, 1953), pp. 195-196; and Karl Kautsky, Foundations of Christianity (New York: International, 1925), p. 43.

[15]Augustine, The City of God xix. 15.

[16]Martin Luther, "The Freedom of a Christian," and "Secular Authority: To What Extent it Should be Obeyed," in his Martin Luther. Selections From His Writings (Garden City: Doubleday, 1961), pp. 52-85, 375-376.

[17]Jean Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion III. 19: 15.

conscience,[18] it is much too easy to let the viewpoint of these theological giants color what one finds in antiquity. Therefore, it seems that the problem of slavery and early Christianity needs to be re-examined.

METHODOLOGY

In approaching this problem, a decision must be made about the parameters of study. In the New Testament, the word δοῦλος (slave) with a cultural meaning is found eighty-eight times.[19] The majority of these occurrences may be divided into three groupings, based on their textual location. They are the Gospels, the Pauline letters, and the catholic epistles. In the Gospels, δοῦλος is used mostly in parabolic or narrative form. In both cases, master and slave relationships are assumed as normal conditions of society. In the narrative form, the social position of the slave is not directly associated with the concept of Christian freedom. In the parables, the word is used either to emphasize the unconditional obedience of a person to God, or to clarify the absence of prerequisites

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[18]Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," Harvard Theological Review, LVI (1963), 199-215.

[19]W. F. Moulton and A. S. Geden (eds.) A Concordance to the Greek New Testament (Edinburgh: Clark, 1963), pp. 227-229.

for a relationship with God.[20] The social significance of
the latter insight remains in the background in relation to
the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, it may
be concluded that a discussion of the relationship of
Christian freedom and slavery is not explicitly found in the
Gospels. What remains are the epistles, and here the prob-
lem of a Christian slave is directly confronted.[21] The
earliest of these texts where the social position of the
slave is discussed are in the Pauline letters, Galatians
3:28, 1 Corinthians 7:20-24, and Philemon.[22] Attention must
center, then, on the epistles, particularly the Pauline
letters.

These texts will be examined form critically,
especially in their relation to their context in antiquity.
However, the concept of background will not be used
specifically. Instead, employed will be the concept of
trajectory, that is, a movement or process of tradition that
travels throughout antiquity. This concept is used, because
a much more intimate relationship exists between the texts

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[20]Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, "Δοῦλος," in Gerhard
Kittel, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand
Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), II, 270-271.

[21]Cf. Paul Robinson Coleman-Norton, "The Apostle
Paul and the Roman Law of Slavery," in his Studies in Roman
Economic and Social History (Princeton: Princeton Univer-
sity Press, 1951), p. 158.

[22]Günther Bornkamm, Paul (New York: Harper & Row,
1971), pp. 241-242.

and their culture than has been previously recognized by scholarship. As a result, any investigation of these texts must take into account the entire movement of these texts during the first three centuries in their cultural set-ting.[23]

In pursuing this methodology, certain assumptions necessarily had to be made. The first of these was the definition of what constitutes authentic Pauline material. For the purposes of this paper, Bultmann's definition that includes only the undisputed letters will be used.[24] Another assumption was the recognition that to speak about ethics is to impose a modern category upon ancient texts. Ethics is usually defined as a deliberate reflection upon the moral life, or a science of human conduct, or an art of living well. What writings are known, particularly by Paul, are letters addressed to specific settings. They do not properly fit into the definition of ethics suggested above. One may speak about ethics in the Pauline epistles only in the sense that his letters reveal upon reflection a concern

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[23]James M. Robinson, "Introduction: Dismantling and Reassembling the Categories of New Testament Scholarship," and Helmut Koester, "Conclusion: The Intention and Scope of Trajectories," in their Trajectories Through Early Christianity (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), pp. 8-16, 270-273.

[24]Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon; Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), I, 190.

about conduct, specifically Christian conduct, and normative judgments about that conduct in relation to his theology.[25] A final assumption that is made is that in this essay the word 'liberation' will have only a political-social meaning, while the term freedom will include in its meaning a broader application. In classical antiquity, the word ἐλευθερία (freedom) was originally defined as a political term in relation to slavery.[26] This relationship of freedom and slavery is never completely lost, even among the Stoics who internalize the meaning of freedom.[27]

THESIS

Proceeding upon these assumptions and by the use of this methodology, it was discovered that Pauline freedom had a social dimension that affected the liberation of slaves in the early church. This thesis may be seen in a trajectory of liberation that moves throughout antiquity. Paul gives

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[25]Victor Paul Furnish, Theology and Ethics in Paul (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), pp. 208-212.

[26]Heinrich Schlier, "Ἐλευθερία," in Kittel, II, 487-502; Werner Jaeger, Paideia (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947), II, 54-55; Kurt Niederwimmer, Der Begriff der Freiheit im Neuen Testament (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1966), pp. 5-13; Dieter Nestle, Eleutheria (Tübingen: Mohr, 1967), pp. 1-4; Dieter Nestle, "Freiheit," in Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1941), VIII, 269-306.

[27]Epictetus, Diss. iv. 1, 6; Gnom. Stob. 28f; Seneca, Ben. iii. 20. 1, 2; Ep. xlvii. 17; Dio Chrysostom, Or. 14.

this trajectory new impetus and power. For him, freedom was a gift of the Spirit. As such, it was related to slavery in a radical way (Galatians 3:28). In 1 Corinthians 7:20-24, Paul backed away from this radical position, but he did not completely lose the possibility of Christian liberation. In Philemon, Paul again returned to the position of Galatians 3:28 by arguing for the liberation of Onesimus. This Pauline possibility of Christian liberation of slaves was not abandoned in the early church. On the contrary, it was maintained and practiced within both 'orthodox and heretical' circles.

RECENT RESEARCH

Before examining the support for this thesis, attention should focus upon recent research into the subject matter. Most of it has taken place within German Protestant circles.[28] One of the most important monographs to appear that encompasses most of the subject matter is the work of Henneke Gülzow, Christentum und Sklaverei in den

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[28]It should be remembered, though, that slavery and Christianity was also a typically American problem, arising from the abolitionist movement and America's own institution of slavery; cf. George D. Armstrong, The Christian Doctrine of Slavery (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969); Albert Barnes, An Inquiry Into the Scriptural Views on Slavery (Detroit: Negro University Press, 1969).

ersten drei Jahrhunderten.[29] As his title suggests, it
seems that his intention was to provide a complete picture
of the relationship of slavery and Christianity in the
household setting during the first three centuries.
However, missing from his description is any lengthy
discussion about the liberation trajectory in the early
church. Part of the reason for this omission is his
exegesis of 1 Corinthians 7:20-24 and Philemon. According
to him, 1 Corinthians 7:20-24 is the articulation of a con-
servative principle by Paul against liberation, while the
argument of Philemon is intended only to secure the kind
reception of Onesimus by his master. What he does not
pursue is his contention that the enthusiastic Corinthians
were freeing slaves. It appears that he had already made
the judgment that this kind of response was non-Christian.

Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:20-24 and Philemon
are, then, crucial in the reconstruction of a Pauline under-
standing of liberation. Discussion about the Corinthian
passage in particular has been quite profuse recently. In
1972, Siegfried Schulz wrote an article that clearly faulted

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[29]Henneke Gülzow, Christentum und Sklaverei in den
ersten drei Jahrhunderten (Bonn: Habelt, 1969).

Paul for his supposed conservative position on slavery.[30]

Schulz argued that in 1 Corinthians 7:21 Paul urged, against his Corinthian opponents, slaves to remain in slavery. According to Schulz, the reason for this support of the status quo was that Paul expected the imminent end of this world. In reflecting upon his analysis, Schulz posited that all was not lost for today, if the eschatological timetable was corrected. Then, the eschatological perspective could become a liberating force.

Schulz's interpretation has drawn considerable criticism. Peter Stuhlmacher wrote that Schulz had not properly taken into account the cultural context in which Paul lived.[31] If he had done so, he would not have criticized Paul so severely. In particular, Stuhlmacher thought that Schulz idealized the Essenes as liberators. He correctly points out that the Essenes were not perfect in that respect. Georg Eichholz has also criticized Schulz for not properly understanding the social situation in antiquity.[32]

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[30]Siegfried Schulz, "Hat Christus die Sklaven befreit? Sklaverei und Emanzipation bewegungen im Abendland," Evangelische Kommentare, V (1972), 13-17; see also Siegfried Schulz, "Evangelium und Welt. Hautprobleme einer Ethik des Neuen Testament," in Hans Dieter Betz and Luise Schottroff (eds.) Neues Testament und christliche Existenz (Tübingen: Mohr, 1973), p. 489.

[31]Peter Stuhlmacher, "Historisch Unangemessen," Evangelische Kommentare, V (1972), 197-298.

[32]Georg Eichholz, Die Theologie des Paulus in Umriss (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1972), pp. 278-283.

According to him, in this context the terms revolutionary or conservative are not descriptions of alternatives that confronted Paul. Moreover, he thinks that Schulz may be mistaken in implying that Paul was consistently anti-enthusiastic. He questions the contention that eschatology determines Paul's thought, and points out that the context has to do with God's calling. Eduard Schweizer has also taken up his pen in reaction to Schulz.[33] He also debates Schulz's use of eschatology as the framework for 1 Corinthians 7:20-24. He suggests that the context is Christian freedom. According to him, this context clarifies why Paul advises the slaves to remain in their status. In the freedom of Christ, there is no necessity to change social status. One is already free.

Unfortunately, this discussion seemed to ignore the appearance in English of the doctoral dissertation by Scott Bartchy.[34] Bartchy's work focused upon the problem of completing the phrase, μᾶλλον χρῆσαι, in 1 Corinthians 7:21. In order to analyze this problem, Bartchy methodologically attacked the text from its historical and cultural context. In so doing, he showed that refusal of manumission was an

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[33]Eduard Schweizer, "Zum Sklavenproblem im Neuen Testament," Evangelische Theologie, XXXII (1972), 502-506.

[34]S. Scott Bartchy, "ΜΑΛΛΟΝ ΧΡΗΣΑΙ: First Century Slavery and the Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:21" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1971).

impossibility for a slave in antiquity. Since he thought that 1 Corinthians 7:21c was a reference to manumission, he concluded that Paul could not have possibly been advising slaves to remain where they are.

From the perspective of this study, Bartchy's main contention appears to be correct. As Stuhlmacher and Eichholz suggested, Bartchy had taken into account the setting of the text. However, in so doing, Bartchy discovered a solution to the problem that was contrary to the usual interpretation about slaves remaining in slavery. Unfortunately, Bartchy discredits the thesis that the Corinthian enthusiasts were freeing slaves, as suggested by Gülzow and others. As a result, he also misses the pneumatic definition of freedom by Paul, and the possibility of Christian liberation.[35] Moreover, it also seems clear that Schulz's contention that eschatology was the determining factor in the literary context of the passage is not correct. Bartchy along with Eichholz, have pointed out the importance of God's calling. This concept in relation to freedom, as Schweizer suggested, take precedence over eschatology in this text.[36]

The most recent, and possibly the best, critical

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[35]See Chapter III, pp. 48-58.

[36]Bartchy's actual completion of 7:21 reflects his neglect of the role of freedom in relation to God's calling; see Chapter III, pp. 58-59.

work on Philemon is the commentary by Eduard Lohse.[37] Lohse
carefully analyzed the text, and seemed to be particularly
conscious of arguing against previous radical hypotheses
that were not based upon the text. For example, he cor-
rectly shows that Philemon was not written as a demand for
Onesimus's freedom, as had been previously suggested.
However, as a result, Lohse neglected to comment positively
about any implication in the text that suggests Onesimus's
liberation. Perhaps this neglect was due to the fact that
he agreed with Gülzow that Paul only wrote the letter to
insure a kind reception of Onesimus by Philemon.

A necessary addition to Lohse's work is the perspec-
tive provided by the historian, Heinz Bellen.[38] Bellen
argued within the context of the problem of slave-escape in
antiquity that Philemon was an important factor in the
motivation for Christian liberation of slaves. According to
him, Galatians 3:28 introduced into Christianity a reli-
gious motivation for flight. The situation of Philemon was
an example of this understanding; Paul was advocating
Onesimus's freedom. However, Bellen's interpretation is
more correct in its perspective than in the argument by
which he attempts to support it. His use of Philo as

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[37]Eduard Lohse, Colossians and Philemon (Phila-
delphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

[38]Heinz Bellen, Studien zur Sklavenflucht im
Römischen Kaiserreich (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1971).

evidence for Paul's meaning is unconvincing.[39]

Bellen re-introduces into the discussion of Paul and slavery Galatians 3:28, something that is usually missing. The importance of this text within Paul's thought is provided by Hans Dieter Betz.[40] Betz begins with the primitive Christian setting of the saying.[41] However, in contrast to Schulz,[42] he argues how this radical statement that eliminated the social distinction between slave and free can be seen as part of Paul's theology. His insight is that Paul himself was a pneumatic, who in fact resembled a gnostic. The abolition of social distinctions is part of the gift of freedom by the Spirit.

There has also recently appeared the dissertation by James Crouch on an important aspect of slavery and early Christian experience, namely the household duties that appear both within and without the New Testament canon.[43]

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[39]See Chapter III, p. 64.

[40]Hans Dieter Betz, "Spirit, Freedom, and Law: Paul's Message to the Galatian Churches," soon to appear in Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok, XXXIX (1974); German version in Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, LXXI (1974).

[41]Betz proposes that this saying was a macarism. However, his definition of the form may be too broad, for it calls into question just what constitutes the form.

[42]Schulz, "Evangelium und Welt," pp. 490-494.

[43]James E. Crouch, The Origin and Intention of the Colossian Haustafel (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1972).

Crouch reviews past studies upon these texts, and points out their deficiencies. He suggests that by focusing upon the Colossian version of this form of household duties with respect to an analysis of its parallels in Hellenistic culture a more accurate conclusion can be drawn than has been drawn previously.[44] With regards to slavery, Crouch argues that the background of the Colossian injunctions of obedience was Hellenistic Judaism. He proposes that the situation to which the Haustafeln were directed was that of enthusiastic unrest. He correctly observes that Galatians 3:28 was probably the motivation for that unrest by Christian slaves. However, due in part to his exegesis of 1 Corinthians 7:20-24, he does not include Paul himself as the cause of the disturbance. Moreover, though he does recognize the diversity of early Christianity, he argues in his hermeneutic that the enthusiastic option is not valid for today, because it leads to a removal from the world and anarchy. However, his choice of the alternative represented by the Haustafeln leads to a justification of the status quo and a support of tyranny. In summary, then, it may be concluded that recent research has not adequately focused upon the possibility of Christian liberation from slavery.

Now, without any further discussion, the support for

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[44]For a critique of Crouch's main thesis, see J. Paul Sampley, "Review . . .," Journal of Biblical Literature, XCI (1974), 123-124.

the thesis of this essay will be presented. In the next chapter, a survey of liberation in the ancient world will be presented. Attention will focus upon freedom as a goal for slaves, the methods of liberation, and the role of religion in liberation. In the third chapter, the question of Paul and slavery will be discussed. Included will be analyses of the texts, Galatians 3:28, 1 Corinthians 7:20-24, and Philemon. In the fourth chapter, liberation in the early church will be examined. Included will be an exploration of the <u>Haustafeln</u> and Christian freedom, incidents of manumission, and movements toward emancipation of all slaves. Finally, in the last chapter, a summary of the historical work will be presented, and an interpretation of its meaning for today will be offered.

Chapter 2

LIBERATION IN THE GRAECO-ROMAN WORLD

Slavery in antiquity was a very complex institution, for there was no single form or type.[1] Depending upon the setting and the individual master, slave conditions varied greatly. Moreover, there were very few economic and social differences between slave and free. As a result, these factors contributed to the lack of a precise definition of what constituted a slave.[2] Some Greek philosophers, particularly Aristotle, tried to define a slave as a natural object. However, this explanation was never completely accepted, for a slave was also considered to be a person.[3]

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[1] The most comprehensive treatment on the subject in English is William L. Westermann, The Slave Systems of Greek and Roman Antiquity (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1955); however, there are deficiencies in it; see the reviews by P. A. Brunt, Journal of Roman Studies, XLVIII (1958), 164-170, and by C. E. M. De Ste. Croix, Classical Review, LXXI (1957), 54-59; for literature on the subject, see Joseph Vogt (ed.) Bibliographie zur antiken Sklaverei (Bochum: Brockmeyer, 1971); for a survey of the history of modern scholarship on slavery, see Joseph Vogt, "Die antike Sklaverei als Forschungsproblem--von Humboldt bis heute," Gymnasium, LXIX (1962), 264-278.

[2] Moses I. Finley, "Slavery," in N. G. L. Hammond and H. H. Schullard, The Oxford Classical Dictionary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 994-996.

[3] Robert Schlaiffer, "Greek Theories of Slavery from Homer to Aristotle," in Moses I. Finley (ed.) Slavery in Classical Antiquity (Cambridge: Heffer, 1960), pp. 93-132.

This ambiguity was also reflected in legal interpretation, even in Roman Law which made an attempt to be more precise.[4]

The task of modern research into ancient slavery is, then, complicated by the ambiguity of the term, slave. It is also made more difficult by the lack of sufficient data that is available on either the number of slaves or their employment. Even more important for any study on slavery and early Christianity is the lack of knowledge about the operation of the institution in the Hellenistic East.

FREEDOM AND SLAVES

The importance of freedom in the ancient slave's perspective has been neglected. Liberation as the goal for slaves has often been ignored in scholarly research. This lack of attention has been due to several factors. One was the tendency to previous researchers to view ancient slavery through the experience of modern slavery or through a rigid Marxist ideology.[5] Another factor which led to the neglect of freedom was the mobility within the ancient social structure itself. In fact, Roman culture, for example, was marked by a social structure characterized by subdivisions

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[4]William Watwick Buckland, The Roman Law of Slavery (Cambridge: University Press, 1908), pp. 1-9, 73-75; for Greek law, see Alick Robin Walsham Harrison, The Law of Athens (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), I, 163-164.

[5]Vogt, "Die antike Sklaverei . . .," pp. 265-272.

of free persons, rather than a social strata from slave to free.[6] Within this system, there was relative ease in moving from one subdivision to another. This situation coupled with the diversity of slave conditions and the few differences that resulted in moving to the next subdivision has made modern scholars discount the importance of freedom, if they considered it at all.

Liberation, however, was an important goal for slaves. Though economic or social status varied little from slave to free, the freedman, perhaps only a serf, was no longer a piece of property, for he could now do things like a free person, such as be married.[7] Moreover, though manumission was probable for the urban slave,[8] it was not a likely option for slaves in more repressive conditions, such as existed on the agricultural farms in the Latin West or in the mining areas of the Hellenistic East. Their real pain and suffering made freedom a very desirable goal.[9] Furthermore, the fact is often overlooked that this freedom

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[6]Moses I. Finley, "Between Slavery and Freedom," Comparative Studies in Society and History, VI (1963-1964), 232-249.

[7]Westermann, p. 1.

[8]Paul Richard Carey Weaver, Familia Caesaris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 1-2.

[9]De Ste. Croix, pp. 54-59.

did not come automatically, but took several years.[10] For

the slave waiting for his liberation, freedom was surely

valued highly. Finally, and most importantly, slaves them-

selves, at least some of them, shared this desire for

liberation. Philo thought that this was so in De Speciali-

bus legibus ii. 84. This opinion was also upheld in the

following portion of a letter from a freedman to his patron:

> . . . but you know in your soul that I, desiring your
> affection, have conducted myself blamelessly just as a
> slave wishes to be conciliatory in the interest of his
> freedom.[11]

Therefore, it is assumed that an important question in

antiquity was whether one was a slave or free, at least from

the slave's perspective.[12]

METHODS OF LIBERATION

If freedom was an essential aspect in the life of a

slave, how was he able to obtain it? In antiquity, libera-

tion of slaves took three major forms; revolt, escape, and

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[10]Reginald Haynes Barrow, Slavery in the Roman
Empire (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1928), p. 196 estimates
two generations until full freedom; James Harper, "Slaves
and Freedmen in Imperial Rome," American Journal of Philol-
ogy, XCIII (1972), 341-342 thinks freedom may have been
possible within a lifetime.

[11]Agyptische Urkunden aus der Staatlichen Museen zu
Berlin. Griechische Urkunden. 4: 1141, 23-25; as cited by
Westermann, p. 106.

[12]Cf. John A. Crook, Law and Life of Rome (Ithaca:
Cornell University Press, 1967), p. 58.

manumission. Of these methods, revolt was probably the most infrequently chosen alternative. In general, this situation was due to the rather satisfactory living conditions and treatment of most slaves, and the relative ease and number of manumissions.[13] As noted earlier, for most urban slaves life was not overly harsh, and freedom was within reach. After all, a contented slave was to the advantage of his or her master, in that he or she would then be probably a good worker, as Sirach 33:30-31 advises. As time passed, humane treatment of slaves was required by Roman law during the Empire, due to the influence of such figures as Cicero and Pliny the Younger. The infrequency of revolt was also occasioned by the high cost of failure, torture and/or death. In the Roman Republic, according to Tacitus (Histories iv. 11), the price for unsuccessful revolt was crucifixion.[14] By the time of the Empire, the penalty was officially defined as a summum supplicium, the highest or greatest penalty that could be inflicted, and its form was, besides crucifixion, cremation or beating.[15]

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[13]Jerome Carcopino, Daily Life in Ancient Rome (London: Routledge, 1941), pp. 56-58; John P. V. D. Balsdon, Life and Leisure In Ancient Rome (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), p. 110.

[14]Westermann, p. 75.

[15]Peter Garnsey, Social Status and Legal Privilege in the Roman Empire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 122-133.

Where revolt did occur it was usually in situations
of extreme cruelty and/or intolerable conditions. Descrip-
tions of such situations may be found in Seneca's Epistle
xlvii or in Petronius's Satyricon 67-74.[16] In the
Hellenistic East, intolerable situations for slaves were
found during the third century B.C. on the islands of Ios
and Chios where rebellions did arise, and in the mining area
of Attica where slaves staged a mass escape during the
Decelean war (Thucydides, His. of Pel. War vii. 27:5). In
the second century, there was a revolt at Delos, the princi-
pal slave market for the East, and an armed political
insurrection led by Aristonicus in the Pergamene kingdom.[17]
In the Latin West, harsh or cruel conditions for slaves were
found on the large agricultural estates in Sicily and Italy,
where rebellions occurred in the second and first centuries
(B.C.), according to Diodorus of Sicily (xxxiv. 2:1-48;
xxxv. 8:1-11:1; xxxvi. 2:1, 2:6, 3:2-10:3) and Livy
(xxxii. 26:4-17; xxxiii. 36:1-3; xxxix. 29:8-10).[18]

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[16]Balsdon, p. 110.

[17]On Hellenistic slave revolts, see Victor Ehren-
berg, The Greek State (London: Methuen, 1969), p. 34; Mik-
hail Ivanovich Rostovtsev, The Social and Economic History
of the Hellenistic World (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941),
I, 40, II, 798, 807-808; T. A. Sinclair, A History of Greek
Political Thought (Cleveland: World, 1967), pp. 261-262.

[18]On Roman slave revolts, see Westermann, pp. 42, 63;
William L. Westermann, "Slave Maintenance and Slave Revolts,"
Classical Philology, XL (1945), 1-10; Mikhail Ivanovich
Rostovtsev, The Social and Economic History of the Roman
Empire (2d ed., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), I, 550.

Probably the most well-known incident was that by Spartacus in Italy during the years 73-71 B.C.[19]

On reflection, three factors may be noticed about slave revolts in antiquity. The first is that rebellion was predominately a Roman phenomenon. Rome had a long history of its occurrence, according to Dionysius of Halicarnassus (Roman Antiquities v. 51:3, 53:4; xii. 6:6) and Livy (iv. 44:13-45:2). The second distinguishing factor is that ancient slave revolts were not revolutions in the modern sense of that term. Even the Pergamene revolt of Aristonicus was not a social revolution, but a political coup that offered freedom to slaves in exchange for man-power.[20] The third characteristic of ancient slave revolts was that by the time of early Christianity they had pretty much faded from the scene. There were a few skirmishes in rural Italy during the first century, A.D., according to Tacitus in his Annals (iv. 27), but these were minor incidents and not very influential.[21] The reasons for this decline were probably due to the increasing humane treatment that was

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[19]S. A. Cook, F. E. Adcock, M. F. Charlesworth (eds.), "The Roman Republic," in Cambridge Ancient History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), IX, 329-332.

[20]David Magie, Roman Rule in Asia Minor (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), I, 151-152, 1040.

[21]Ramsay Macmullen, Enemies of the Roman Order (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 337.

expected for slaves and the opportunity of manumission for most urban slaves.

Escape was probably the simplest and most common method of liberation for slaves throughout antiquity. It was particularly frequent during the time of war.[22] The continuity and importance of this avenue to freedom may be seen in the history of the repressive measures taken to combat it.[23] According to Herodotus (vi. 11) and Aristophanes (Birds 760), run-away slaves in classical Athens were severely punished. In the Hellenistic period after Alexander the Great, a system of rewards was created to aid in the discovery and return of slaves to their masters.[24] By the height of the Roman Empire, "The whole mechanism of society ground into action to restore this all too mobile property . . ."[25] Now, besides a reward system, the right of search and seizure for run-aways was established. In this situation arose the phenomenon of the fugitivarius, the run-away man, who paid a master a cheap price for a missing slave and then resold him for a higher price to someone else

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[22]Moses I. Finley, "Was Greek Civilization Based on Slave Labour?" in his Slavery in Classical Antiquity, pp. 67-68.

[23]Heinz Bellen, Studien zur Sklavenflucht im Römischen Kaiserreich (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1971), pp. 1-5.

[24]Westermann, Slave Systems, pp. 23, 39.

[25]Crook, pp. 186-187; Buckland, pp. 268-274.

or manumitted him for the slave's _peculium_ (earnings from outside work) in order to secure a handsome profit. Many a slave could escape in this system with the financial aid of others or with his _peculium_ which would pay off the _fugitivarius_ for his freedom. Unfortunately for the slave, laws were created and enforced to put an end to this practice, and, as a result, ". . . made the game not worth the candle for the slave who hoped for his freedom."[26] Bartchy concludes that escape was an exception in the century before these laws were made necessary.[27] However, there seems to be no other data to support his conclusion. In fact, Philemon and Pliny the Younger's letter (_Epistle_ ix. 21) are evidence against his assertion.

Manumission was the most probable method of liberation. This option was a legal process that released a slave from an owner's control and from any future possibility of being owned by anyone.[28] As such, its control and exercise rested for the most part in the hands of the master, not the slave. Reasons for its use were numerous, many of which

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[26]Crook, pp. 186-187.

[27]S. Scott Bartchy, "ΜᾶΛΛΟΝ ΧΡᾶΣΑΙ: First Century Slavery and the Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:21" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1971), p. 187.

[28]Buckland, p. 438.

were to the advantage of the master.[29] They range from
being a spur to good work to a reward for the performance of
a service, such as serving in the armed forces or being a
concubina. Economic incentive could also motivate a master.
At times, it was too expensive to keep many slaves. Begin-
ning in Hellenistic culture, there developed the tradition
of ransoming a slave from his status by his relative
(Demosthenes lvi),[30] by himself through the gods,[31] or by
societies that would make a temporary loan.[32] Manumission
could also be decreed against the wishes of a master, for
instance, in the case of extreme cruelty.[33]

Since manumission was a legal process, a discussion
about the legal definition of it is essential. However, the
law in antiquity was actually three different systems, at
least for the scope of this study. The reason for this

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[29]For a complete analysis, cf. Bartchy, pp. 148-153;
P. A. Brunt, "Work and Slavery," in John P. V. D. Balsdon
(ed.) Roman Civilization (Baltimore: Penguin, 1965),
p. 176; Buckland, pp. 598-648; Arnold Mackay Duff, Freedmen
in the Early Roman Empire (New York: Barnes and Noble,
1958), pp. 18-19; Rostovtsev, I, 208-209, II, 942-944.

[30]H. D. F. Kitto, The Greeks (Baltimore: Penguin,
1957), pp. 214-215.

[31]See pp.

[32]Friedrich M. Heichelheim, "Eranos," in Hammond and
Schullard, p. 404; William L. Westermann, "Slavery and the
Elements of Freedom in Ancient Greece," in Finley, Slavery
in Classical Antiquity, p. 24.

[33]Buckland, pp. 602-607.

complexity was due to the very nature of Roman law. During the Empire, all the known world was subject to it. It applied directly only to its own citizens, and left local laws intact for the vast majority of people.[34] Besides Roman law, the scope of this study must take into account two local law systems, Jewish and Greek.

Jewish law on manumission was characterized by a fundamental distinction between Jew and Gentile. If a slave was a Jew, his or her servitude had a mandatory statutory limit of six years. This boundary could only be extended if it was the wish of the slave. Manumission could occur before the maximum duration if it was the gift of the master or if the slave was ransomed by another or by himself, as in Hellenistic culture. Gentile slaves were in a different category under Jewish law; their chances of liberation were much less likely. First of all there was no mandatory limit for servitude. A Gentile could be a slave for life. He could be manumitted by the wish of his owner in a will or in a deathbed petition or for some special service, as it will be seen was the practice in Roman law. As in Greek law, the possibility of sacral manumission existed. In rare instances, liberation could also come by ransom, by court action against a cruel master, or in the event of the death

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[34]Crook, p. 29.

of a childless master.[35] Clearly, a Gentile's freedom under Jewish law was much more problematic.[36]

Manumission in Greek law[37] was characterized by its ambiguity. The chief reason for this state of affairs was the fact that freedom itself was divisible. According to William Westermann's analysis of the Delphic manumission inscriptions, freedom was divisible into four parts; social status, personal inviolability, choice of work, and privilege to travel.[38] One, all or some of these freedoms would be granted at a single time. Common with these partial freedoms was the fulfillment of certain service restrictions called παραμονή.[39] In none of these instances was citizenship ever granted. Under Greek law, a slave could purchase his freedom or freedoms, for example from his outside

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[35]Joachim Jeremias, _Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus_ (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), p. 312, 334-335.

[36]Solomon Zeitlin, "Slavery during the Second Commonwealth and the Tannaitic Period," _Jewish Quarterly Review_, LII (1962-1963), 185-218.

[37]There is no such thing really as Greek law, only _koine_ laws that varied from city to city. However, there is enough unity to be able to speak about Greek law. See Fritz Pringsheim, _The Greek Law of Sale_ (Weimar: Bohlaus, 1950), pp. 1-8.

[38]Westermann, _Slave Systems_, pp. 34-35; Westermann, "Slavery and the Elements of Freedom," pp. 27-28.

[39]Westermann, _Slave Systems_, pp. 25, 35; Westermann, "Slave Maintenance and Slave Revolts," pp. 1-4.

earnings or from a loan from an _eranos_ (association).[40] To complicate matters, these partial freedoms could be given through any one of three procedures; informal, sacral, or civil. The informal process was the most frequently used form. It was made by the owner through a letter usually accompanied by a public announcement.[41] Since sacral manumission involved the role of religion, it will be discussed at length later in this chapter. Civil manumission involved only a minimal participation by the state. The city provided protection for the freedman through publication of lists of the free, and collected a small tax for legal recognition itself. Actual liberation was simply accomplished by public announcement as in the informal form. Unlike Roman law, there were no general restrictions upon the process, and manumission by testament was less likely.[42]

The Romans brought systemization and definition to the forms of manumission. Basically, for them, there were two types; formal (_manumissio iusta_) and informal (_manumissio minus iusta_). The informal type included three kinds; letter format, table-fellowship with the master, and an oral declaration before the friends of the owner. The

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[40]Harrison, I, 182-183.

[41]Bartchy, pp. 65-66, 159-160.

[42]J. Walter Jones, _The Law and Legal Theory of the Greeks_ (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), pp. 284-286; Harrison, I, 183-184.

latter was probably the most frequently used form of this type.[43] Formal manumission consisted of three sub-divisions; _censu_, _vindicta_, and _testamento_.[44] _Censu_ was the practice of inscribing a slave's name as a freedman upon a census list, and was an institution of the Republic.[45] _Vindicta_ was an act, usually in the form of a slap on the cheek, before a magistrate in a court. This appearance may have been in the form of a legal suit,[46] or it may have been merely a judicial process in itself.[47] _Testamento_ was the process of liberating slaves upon the death of their master by a statement in a will or codicil. It could contain a _dies_, a condition, that could defer the manumission until a certain time in the future or until the completion of some particular named act. During the Empire, this condition was formalized as a _fidei commissum_ which directed a named person to free the slave, usually upon the fulfillment of a certain condition.[48] The most frequent kind of formal

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[43]Duff, p. 21.

[44]Buckland, pp. 439-452.

[45]David Daube, "Two Early Patterns of Manumission," _Journal of Roman Studies_, XXXVI (1946), 57-75.

[46]Duff, p. 23.

[47]Susan Treggiari, _Roman Freedmen During the Late Republic_ (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 22-23.

[48]Buckland, pp. 442-446, 460-466.

manumission possibly was <u>testamento</u>,[49] though recent

scholarship has questioned this assertion.[50]

All of these Roman forms of manumission originally

granted full freedom including citizenship.[51] However, as

time passed, certain restrictions were added. Like the

Greeks, the Romans recognized future service restrictions,

<u>operae</u>, which were more limited than the Greek type in

length of duration.[52] Other restrictions included a value

tax on formally manumitted slaves.[53]

The most important restrictions were the laws

established during Augustus' reign. The <u>Lex Iunia</u>[54] was

the first of these legislations. It legally recognized

informal manumissions, but, in so doing, restricted the

freedom of the persons liberated by this process. It

created for these freedmen a special status, <u>Latini Iunia</u>,

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[49]<u>Ibid</u>., pp. 442-446.

[50]Treggiari, pp. 27-28.

[51]S. A. Cook, F. E. Adcock, M. P. Charlesworth (eds.), "The Augustan Empire," in <u>Cambridge Ancient History</u>, X, 430.

[52]Crook, pp. 52, 191.

[53]Cook, Adcock and Charlesworth, "The Augustan Empire," X, 197, 428-430.

[54]17 B.C., the dating is problematic; see Buckland, pp. 534-537.

which did not include citizenship of its members.[55] Next was the <u>Lex Fufia Canina</u>[56] which limited the number of slaves that could be freed through a testament. Finally, there was the <u>Lex Aelia Sentia</u>[57] which restricted the number of manumissions according to the ages of the master and the slave, voided manumission by debtors, and created another social class, the <u>dediticii</u>, freedmen who had been punished or tortured as slaves. The significance and impact of these laws upon liberation have been very much debated by historians. However, it is certain that their purpose was to restrict manumissions. Probably, this action arose from a situation where there were numerous liberations. Therefore, it may be concluded that by the time of early Christian experience, Roman manumissions were undoubtedly common, though somewhat restricted.

In summary, then, manumission was the most common method of liberation in antiquity. It was a recognized process in Jewish, Greek, and Roman law. In Jewish law, it was characterized by the fundamental distinction between Jew and Greek. In Greek law, manumission was an avenue to, not freedom in full, but partial freedoms. Under Roman law,

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[55]Cook, Adcock and Charlesworth, "The Augustan Empire," X, 431; Buckland, p. 533.

[56]2 B.C.; Westermann, <u>Slave Systems</u>, p. 89; Buckland, pp. 596-597.

[57]4 A.D.; Barrow, p. 184; Buckland, pp. 537-549.

manumission was carefully defined and restricted. By the
time of the early church, it was probably a common occur-
rence. Escape, however, did not totally disappear from the
scene. Only revolt as a method of liberation became almost
nonexistent.

THE ROLE OF RELIGION

In the midst of this complex web of differing legal
systems of manumission and the extra-legal means of escape,
religion played a major role. This role was enacted in a
context where slavery as an institution was accepted as a
given. In fact, it was a necessary factor in the economy of
ancient society.[58] In this situation, slavery was often
rationalized as a natural phenomenon, for example by Plato
(Republic 469b-471c; Laws 720a-d, 773e, 966b)[59] and
Aristotle (Politics i. 2:2-22).[60] To argue that slavery was
not a natural thing meant that only force was left to
maintain the institution. This acceptance of slavery was
challenged by the Sophists.[61]

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[58]Finley, "Was Greek Civilization . . .?" pp. 53-72.

[59]See Gregory Vlastos, "Slavery in Plato's Thought,"
in Finley, Slavery in Classical Antiquity, pp. 133-149.

[60]See Schlaifer, "Greek Theories of Slavery," in
Finley, Ibid., pp. 120-127, 130-131.

[61]Ibid., pp. 116-117, 127-129.

In the period of the early church, the Essenes rejected slavery as an institution, according to Philo and Josephus.[62] According to those authors, the Essenes held no slaves; thereby they contributed to freedom and justice. However, according to the Damascus Document (xii. 11), slaves were held by members of the Essene community.[63] These conflicting reports may be explained either by different orders within the Essene sect or historical evolution.[64] If so, then, some of the Essenes probably rejected slavery. This act may have been due to the very nature of the community which was different from the common social structure of society.[65]

Though not as abolitionists, other religions and their institutions did fulfill some functions in the processes and means of liberation. The first of these functions was that of providing asylum for run-aways. This liberation was short-lived in duration, and really was only an appeal process. Moreover, it was not practiced or

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[62]Philo, Quod Omnis Probus Liber sit 79; Apologia pro Judaeis xi. 4; Josephus, Jewish Antiquities xviii. 21.

[63]A. Dupont-Sommer, The Essenes Writings of Qumran (Oxford: Blackwell, 1961), pp. 21-37, 155.

[64]Frank Moore Cross, Jr., The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies (New York: Doubleday, 1958), pp. 59-60.

[65]Peter Stuhlmacher, "Historisch Unangemessen," Evangelische Kommentare, V (1972), 298.

recognized in all temples in antiquity.[66] In classical
Athens, it consisted simply of allowing the priest of the
temple to decide whether a slave should be returned to his
master or if he should have the chance to argue that he
should be sold to another.[67] In Hellenistic times, asylum
was considered a privilege and was reluctantly granted by
the governing officials.[68] Roman law did not provide for
temple asylum, but it did allow a slave to plead his case
at a statue of the Emperor who himself was a deity.[69]
Hellenistic Jews also recognized the practice of asylum, and
extended it not only for the synagogue but for the family
hearth (Philo, De Virtutibus 124).[70]

Religion and its institutions performed another
function in liberation, that of being a custodian of
freedom and a facilitator of equality. During the
Hellenistic period after Alexander the Great, political and
social repression was common, and it affected the right of

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[66]C. F. D. Moule, The Epistles of Paul the Apostle
to the Colossians and to Philemon (Cambridge: University
Press, 1967), pp. 34-37.

[67]Westermann, Slave Systems, pp. 17-18, 40-41.

[68]Ehrenberg, pp. 212, 236.

[69]Westermann, Slave Systems, p. 108.

[70]Ibid., p. 41; Erwin R. Goodenough, "Paul and
Onesimus," Harvard Theological Review, XXII (1929), 181-
183.

asylum, in that it was reluctantly recognized.[71] Freedom

was preserved in this time by cults and associations which

afforded the practice of freedom within the community.[72]

This freedom in the community was practiced in the Orphic

cult,[73] the Bacchus-Dionysius groups,[74] the Eleusinian

mysteries,[75] and Mithraism.[76] The slave was also given

freedom at certain sanctuaries, such as the one of Spes at

Minturrae,[77] and shrines, such as the private one in

Philadelphia.[78] Greek associations (eranoi), which were

sacral in character, admitted slaves on an equal basis with

free men.[79] Likewise, their Roman counterparts, the

collegia, practiced this equality.[80] These associations

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[71]Ehrenberg, pp. 250-251.

[72]Ambrogio Donini, "The Myth of Salvation in Ancient Slave Society," Science and Society, XV (1950-1951), 57-60.

[73]Schlaiffer, "Greek Theories of Slavery," p. 97.

[74]John G. Gager, "Religion and Social Classes in the Early Roman Empire," in Stephen Benko and John J. O'Rourke (eds.) The Catacombs and the Colosseum (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1971), p. 11.

[75]Martin P. Nilsson, Greek Folk Religion (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), p. 58.

[76]Franz Cumont, The Mysteries of Mithra (Chicago: Open Court, 1903), pp. 63-64.

[77]Carcopino, p. 57.

[78]Westermann, Slave Systems, p. 41.

[79]Jones, pp. 157-173.

[80]Westermann, Slave Systems, pp. 78-79, 108.

were not viewed as a silent threat to the social order,
except for their middle class forms which had a political
dimension (Pliny the Younger, Epistle x. 33-34).[81]

However, in antiquity religious institucions were
not only protectors and custodians; they were themselves
liberators. This role began in Greek culture as sacral
manumission, which was simply the emancipation of a slave
through the temple authorities. Under Greek and Jewish law,
this act was legally binding. Sacral manumission was
practiced by many religions sporadically[82] throughout the
ancient world for approximately five hundred years.[83]
Delphi was probably the center of this practice, since its
own inscriptions testify that it liberated slaves from all
over the Graeco-Roman world.[84] The greatest number of these

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[81]Adrian N. Sherwin-White, The Letters of Pliny
(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), pp. 606-610, 774; vs.
Bo Reicke, The New Testament Era (Philadelphia: Fortress
Press, 1968), p. 309.

[82]Delphi's influence may not have been very great;
cf. Adolf Deissmann, Light from the Ancient East (New York:
Hodder and Stoughton, 1910), p. 235; and Franz Bömer,
Untersuchungen über die Religionen der Sklaven in Griechen-
land und Rom (Mainz: Akademie der Wissenschaften und der
Literatur, 1960), II, 29, 51.

[83]W. Dittenberger (ed.), Sylloge Inscriptionum
Graecarum (Hildesheim: Olms, 1960), pp. 1200-1325; Deiss-
mann, p. 325; A. Cameron, "Inscriptions Relating to Sacral
Manumission and Confession," Harvard Theological Review,
XXXII (1939), 143-180.

[84]Mary L. Gordon, "The Nationality of Slaves Under
the Roman Empire," in Finley, Slavery in Classical
Antiquity, p. 171.

Delphic manumissions took place during the years two
hundred to fifty-three B.C.[85] As has been previously
stated, freedom here was divisible. Approximately a quarter
of the Delphic inscriptions reveal that only two of the four
freedoms were granted. Usually these partial liberations
were connected with a παραμονή contract that prescribed
certain future service obligations for the freed slave.[86]

The inscriptions themselves are found at Delphi on
the wall of the temple of Apollo and various other loca-
tions.[87] Their general form was as follows:

> Date. . . . sold to the Pythian Apollo a male slave
> named . . . at a price of . . . minae, for freedom (or
> on condition that he shall be free, etc.) Then follows
> any special arrangements and the names of the wit-
> nesses.[88]

As can be seen from this sketch, the form in which libera-
tion took place was that of a sale.[89] The money for the
transaction probably came from the earnings which the slave

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[85]Westermann, Slave Systems, pp. 32-35.

[86]These contracts could be circumvented by either
financial payment or the substitution of another in one's
place; F. Sokolowski, "The Real Meaning of Sacral Manumis-
sion," Harvard Theological Review, XLVII (1954), 175-176;
Bömer, II, 41.

[87]See Bömer, II, 29.

[88]Deissmann, p. 327.

[89]Manumission without a sale was an exception;
Bömer, II, 30, 49f.

himself had set aside from outside work.[90] After the sale, the freed slave was designated as an ἱερός, an ἐλεύθερος or an ἀνέφαπτος which was the most common title.[91]

Attempts to explain this sale have encountered several problems which remain unsolved.[92] For example, the following Delphic inscription which, according to Adolf Deissmann, clarifies the process:

Date. ἐπιάτο ὁ ᾽Απόλλον ὁ Πύθιος παρὰ Σωσιβιόυ ᾽Αμφισσέος ἐπ᾽ ἐλευθερίαι σῶμ[α] γυναικεῖον, αι οὔομα Νίκαια, τὸ γένος ᾽Ρωμαίαν, τιμᾶς ἀργυριόυ μυᾶυ τριῶν καὶ ἡμιμναίου. προαποδότας κατὰ τὸν νόμου Εὔμναστος ᾽Αμφισσεος. τὰν τιμαν ἀπέχει. ταν δὲ ὤναν ἐπίστευσε Νίκαια τῶι ᾽Απόλλυνι ἐπ᾽ ἐλευθεριάι.	Date. Apollo the Pythian bought from Sosibius of Amphissa, for freedom, a female slave, whose name is Nicaea, by race a Roman, with a price of three minae of silver and a half-mina. Former seller according to the law: Eummastus of Amphissa. The price he has received. And the ownership Nicaea has committed unto Apollo for freedom.

Names of witnesses, etc., follow.[93]

The first question about this sale is whether or not it involves a real purchase? If so, who is the buyer?

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[90]Westermann, Slave Systems, p. 16; Harrison, I, 182.

[91]Bömer, II, 32.

[92]Ibid., pp. 14-16, 39 who has shown that Sokolowski's theory that sacral manumission arose out of temple asylum and dedication to the god was based on faulty evidence.

[93]Deissmann, p. 327.

Deissmann has called it a fictitious sale,[94] while Wester-
mann has described it as an entrustment sale.[95] In
contrast, Fritz Pringsheim has seen it as transfer of a dual
ownership.[96] The slave becomes the possessor of the actual
or practical ownership of himself, while the god possesses
the legal ownership as a protection against the breaking of
the arrangement. Bartchy reports that it was a real sale
where the god functioned as a middleman, since a slave under
Greek law could not enter into any contract.[97]

Another problem is why particular gods were
involved. In this inscription the god was Apollo; he and
Dionysus were the gods that were usually involved. Dionysus
was the god of ecstasy who allowed one to stand outside
himself and who gave freedom in that process. As the
'Liberator,'[98] Dionysus might be expected to be involved in
the liberation of slaves. However, Apollo was the god of
law and order.[99] Why was he involved in such a process that

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[94]Ibid., p. 327.

[95]Westermann, Slave Systems, p. 35.

[96]Pringsheim, pp. 185-186.

[97]Bartchy, p. 161.

[98]William Keith Chambers Guthrie, The Greeks and
Their Gods (Boston: Beacon Press, 1954), pp. 148-149;
E. R. Dodds, The Greeks and the Irrational (Berkeley:
University of California Press, 1951), pp. 76-77.

[99]Guthrie, p. 183f.

disturbed the natural order? Apollo was also involved in ecstasy. As the god of prophecy, he inspired prophetic madness in the Pythia at Delphi.[100] This connection with ecstasy may possibly explain his relation to the liberation of slaves.

Finally, there is also the question about whether the inspiration of the Pythia at Delphi was associated with the liberation of slaves. Prophetic madness, according to Plato, was an experience where ". . . the usual customs were changed."[101] By divine release, the Pythia was lifted out of the ordinary customs.[102] Was this freeing experience of inspiration related to the liberation of slaves? Perhaps one of the usual customs that was changed was slavery.

In conclusion, then, it may be said that religious institutions 'created' a trajectory of liberation in the ancient world. It began with the criticism of slavery as an institution by the Sophists. It was evidenced in the protection of escaped slaves by temple asylum. It was preserved within the religious community itself. Legally,

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[100]Ibid., pp. 200-202; Dodds, p. 64f.; Hermann Kleinknecht, "Πνεῦμα," in Gerhard Kittel, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), VI, 345; Helmut Kramer, "Προφήτης," in Kittel, VI, 789.

[101]Plato, Phaedrus 265a.

[102]Ibid., 244c, 249c, 250c; Republic 611e.

liberation was defined as manumission. In this, religious institutions also played a significant role, in sacral manumission.

Chapter 3

PAUL AND SLAVERY

In the previous chapter, it was proposed that there was in antiquity a trajectory of liberation from slavery within religion. Did early Christianity share in this movement? If it did, how was that liberation understood in the Christian perspective? In order to answer those questions, the subject of Paul and slavery needs to be examined.

Concerning Paul himself and his personal relation to the institution of slavery, little is known outside of his own letters. According to Acts 21:39; 22:3, Tarsus was Paul's hometown. From other sources, it is known that this town was a thriving Hellenistic city of trade and commerce.[1] It was the center of a linen industry which employed mostly freedmen in the performance of its tasks.[2] Obviously, it was highly unlikely that a city of this nature had no slaves. Therefore, it may be presumed that Paul had some

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[1]Adrian N. Sherwin-White, Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 180.

[2]Arnold Hugh Martin Jones, "Slavery in the Ancient World," in Moses I. Finley (ed.) Slavery in Classical Antiquity (Cambridge: Heffer, 1960), p. 12.

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acquaintance with slavery there.[3] How much Paul knew about

the laws affecting the institution is uncertain. According

to Acts 22:3 and Paul's own words in Galatians 1:13-14;

Philippians 3:5, Paul was a Jew, perhaps a Pharisee in his

education.[4] As such, he would have been familiar with the

Jewish law regarding slaves and their manumission.[5] More-

over, Paul was probably also familiar with Greek and Roman

law regarding slaves and their manumission. As a Roman

citizen (Acts 16:37; 22:28),[6] he would have been acquainted

with Roman law. His own use of the Greek legal term,

ἀπελεύθερος (freedman),[7] in 1 Corinthians 7:22 suggests his

familiarity with Greek law, if not also Roman law.[8]

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[3]Vs. S. Scott Bartchy, "ΜΑΛΛΟΝ ΧΡΗΣΑΙ: First Century Slavery and the Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:21" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1971), pp. 81-85.

[4]Günther Bornkamm, Paul (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 3-12; cf. Ernst Haenchen, The Acts of the Apostles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), pp. 624-625.

[5]Exodus 20:10; 23:17; Deuteronomy 23:15-16; see Hermann Strack and Paul Billerbeck, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch (München: Beck, 1926), II, 562-563.

[6]Sherwin-White, pp. 144-145, 175-176; Haenchen, pp. 498, 633-635.

[7]Alick Robin Walsham Harrison, The Law of Athens (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), I, 181.

[8]Bartchy, pp. 94-95; Francis Lyall, "Roman Law in the Writings of Paul - The Slave and the Freedman," New Testament Studies, XVII (1970), 76.

Therefore, it may be assumed that Paul had a knowledge about slavery and the laws affecting it.

THE FREEDOM OF GALATIANS 3:28

The earliest passage that is known about Paul and slavery is his words in his letter to the Galatians; "There is not Jew or Greek, there is not slave or free, there is not male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). This verse along with the verses 26-29 was probably an early Christian saying adapted by Paul.[9] Verse 27 suggests that this saying was connected with baptism.[10] In this pre-Pauline stage, baptism was as 'putting on' the body of Christ.[11] In the oneness of Christ

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[9]Siegfried Schulz, "Evangelium und Welt. Hautprobleme einer Ethik des Neuen Testament," in Hans Dieter Betz and Luise Schottroff (eds.) Neues Testament und christliche Existenz (Tübingen: Mohr, 1973), pp. 490-494; Betz points out the carefully constructed pattern of this saying and suggests that it was a macarism; see Hans Dieter Betz, "Spirit, Freedom, and Law: Paul's Message to the Galatian Churches," soon to appear in Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok, XXXIX (1974).

[10]Heinrich Schlier, Der Brief an die Galater (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1971), pp. 171-179.

[11]On the 'body of Christ,' see Wilhelm Bousset, Kyrios Christos (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), p. 158, 190-194; Albrecht Oepke, "Έν," in Gerhard Kittel, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), II, 542; Eduard Schweizer, "Σῶμα," in Kittel, VII, 1024 (Bibliography), 1036-1041, 1067-1071; Ernst Käsemann, "The Theological Problem Presented by the Motif of the Body of Christ," in his Perspectives on Paul (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), pp. 112, 116-117.

all cultural, social, and sexual distinctions had no
existence or meaning. The religious context for this
radical understanding was probably a spirit-filled enthu-
siasm.[12] This enthusiasm overflowed into the liberation
from slavery for all slaves who were Christians.[13]

Since Paul adopted this saying, how did he under-
stand it? The answer to this question is found in his
understanding of freedom.[14] It has been firmly established
that freedom for Paul was an eschatological concept that
released the individual believer from law, sin, and death.
As an eschatological concept, freedom was paradoxical; the
believer, was free and yet not free. Only in the eschaton
was freedom fully realized. The Christian, then, was free
from the law (Galatians 2:4f, 4:21-31; 5:1, 13; Romans 7:3f,
8:2f), that is he was free from the Torah and the obligation
to fulfill it. Moreover, he was now free from sin
(Romans 5-6; 8:2f), that is he was free from the internal
compulsion to sin but not from the possibility of sinning.
Furthermore, he was free internally from death
(Romans 6:21f; 8:2f, 21), since life was already a present
possibility even though its complete fulfillment was in the

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[12]Schulz, pp. 490-494.

[13]See Chapter IV, pp. 70-73.

[14]Freedom, not baptism, is the concern of the
Galatian letter; see Betz, "Spirit, Freedom, and Law."

future (1 Corinthians 15:17-21).[15]

This freedom was pneumatically defined by Paul.[16] For Paul, the Spirit was the divine power that was the opposite of the power of the flesh, the tendency to live under sin.[17] The Spirit was the one who brought to the believer freedom (Galatians 4:4-6). It was he who disclosed the reality of the sonship of God made possible by Christ (Galatians 4:4-6).[18] In fact, it was the Spirit who cried in the believers' hearts for salvation (Galatians 4:6; Romans 8:26-27).[19] The work of the Spirit was not limited only to the indicative of salvation, but was a participant which enabled the believer to follow the imperative of obedience as love.[20] The Spirit, then was an essential

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[15]Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), I, 330-352; Heinrich Schlier, "Ἐλεύθερος," in Kittel, II, 496-502, Ernst Fuchs, "Freiheit," in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart (Tübingen: Mohr, 1957), II, 1101-1104; Hans Conzelmann, An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. 280-284.

[16]Bultmann, I, 333-335; Eduard Schweizer, "Πνεῦμα," in Kittel, VI, 415-437.

[17]Bultmann, I, 153f, 232-239; Conzelmann, p. 277.

[18]Schweizer, "Πνεῦμα," VI, 426; Eduard Schweizer, "Υἱός," in Kittel, VIII, 391.

[19]See Ernst Käsemann, "The Cry for Liberty in the Worship of the Church," in his Perspectives on Paul, p. 130.

[20]Heinrich Schlier, "Zur Freiheit gerufen. Das paulinische Freiheitsverständnis," Geist und Leben, XLIII (1970), p. 429.

aspect for Christian freedom (Galatians 4:1-10; 5:13-16;
1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 7:6).[21]

This pneumatic freedom was revealed to the Chris-
tian, according to Paul, in an act of inspiration. An
example of this event is found in Romans 8:16. In this
verse, the term has two meanings; either confirmation which
leads to a non-Pauline implication or inspiration.[22] That
inspiration was meant may be seen from the use of ecstatic
terms in the literary context of the verse, such as ἄγω in
8:14 and κράζω in 8:15.[23] Moreover, inspiration as the
meaning may also be seen from the rather close parallel to
the words, ἀββὰ ὁ πατήρ in 8:15 to the petition of the
prophetess at the oracle of the Sybl, "Deus, ecce, deus."[24]
For Paul, this act of inspiration by the Spirit was differ-
ent from other similar acts of divine powers in antiquity.[25]
First, Paul did not think that the divine spirit replaced
the human νοῦς in the act of inspiration, thereby destroying

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[21]Cf. the above and what follows with Betz, "Spirit,
Freedom, and Law," to whom much is indebted.

[22]Hermann Strathmann, "Μάρτυς," in Kittel, IV, 509.

[23]Hans Dieter Betz, Seminar Discussion, School of
Theology at Claremont, April 26, 1972; Schlier, Der Brief
an die Galater, p. 198.

[24]Virgil, The Aeneid, vi. 46:5.

[25]See Johannes Behm, "Γλῶσσα," in Kittel, I, 718-
727; Albrecht Oepke, "Ἔκστασις," in Kittel, II, 451-458;
Hermann Kleinknecht, "Πνεῦμα," in Kittel, VI, 343-352;
Ruodolf Meyer, "Προφήτης," in Kittel, VI, 784-792.

the whole person.[26] Secondly, as Käsemann points out,[27] for

Paul inspiration was a communal phenomenon that occurred

within worship. Third, Paul maintained the priority of

interpretation over the act of inspiration, as may be seen

in his discussion of glossolalia in 1 Corinthians 14.[28]

Fourth, Paul understood that interpretation was a work of

the Spirit itself, not as a process of the νοῦς as in

Plato.[29]

What the Spirit revealed in the act of inspiration

was that the believers were children of God (Romans 8:16;

Galatians 4:6-7). This possession of 'sonship' meant

concretely the believer's freedom. It was not only a

promise realized fully in the eschaton, but a present

reality, even if only partially actualized.[30] Therefore,

Paul himself was an enthusiast who could claim, "where the

Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Corinthians

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[26]Cf. Philo, Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres 258-266.

[27]Käsemann, "Cry for Liberty . . .," p. 130.

[28]Thomas William Gillespie, "Prophecy and Tongues:
The Concept of Christian Prophecy in the Pauline Theology"
(Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Claremont Graduate School,
1971), pp. 74-78.

[29]Kleinknecht, "Πνεῦμα," VI, 349.

[30]Schweizer, "Υἱός," VIII, 391; vs. Schlier, Der
Brief an die Galater, p. 197.

3:17).[31] This pneumatically inspired freedom had a social
dimension, according to Galatians 3:28. For Paul, this
saying probably meant, with respect to the slave, complete
freedom.[32] Paul not only takes over the liberation trajec-
tory from his culture but gives it new force and power. The
Christian slave's new self-understanding of existence was
that he was a child of God.[33]

PAUL'S ADVICE TO THE SLAVES IN
1 CORINTHIANS 7:20-24

After Galatians 3:28, the next time that Paul
communicated anything about slaves was 1 Corinthians 7:20-
24. In order to understand Paul's intention and meaning in
this passage, the analysis will focus upon the setting of
the letter and the literary context of this passage.

Corinth was an important, wealthy, trading center

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[31]Vs. Walter Schmithals, Gnosticism in Corinth
(Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 315f who argues that
2 Corinthians 3:17 is a gnostic gloss. What he ignores is
that a gnostic formulation can be Pauline, as he recognizes
in 1 Corinthians 2:8f.

[32]The connection between inspiration and liberation
may also be seen in the fact that adoption as a son meant
in antiquity that one was emancipated from the household.
The slave as the lowest member of the household if a Chris-
tian would then be free; see E. A. Judge, The Social Pat-
terns of the Christian Groups in the First Century (London:
Tyndale Press, 1960), p. 38.

[33]There might also be a relation between Paul and
Delphi here, if inspiration and liberation were connected
at Delphi as they were for Paul; cf. Bartchy, p. 215.

between East and West during the time of Paul's letter to the church there.[34] It may have even replaced Delos as the principal slave market for the eastern Mediterranean area. Ethnically, the population of the city was quite diverse and represented a variety of cultures.[35] Approximately one-third of this population were slaves. Because of the diversity in the ethnic composition of the Corinthian population and the variety of slave conditions, the only thing that the slaves in Corinth had in common was their enslavement.[36] This bond alone did not lead to any unrest. In the modern understanding, there was no class consciousness in the ancient world, and there is no evidence to support any thesis about a revolt in the city.[37]

The Corinthian church was divided into several factions, and these groupings produced several ethical and theological disputes. In fact, it was this situation that caused Paul to write his letter.[38] From that letter, it may

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[34]G. Ernest Wright, Biblical Archaeology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), pp. 263-266.

[35]Sherwin-White, p. 177.

[36]Bartchy, pp. 95, 101.

[37]Ibid.; vs. Ernst Käsemann, "Principles of the Interpretation of Romans 13," in his New Testament Questions of Today (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), pp. 208-209.

[38]Paul Feine, Johannes Behm, and Werner Georg Kümmel, Introduction to the New Testament (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), pp. 200-201.

be assumed that there was a theological position or several

positions, against which Paul was arguing. According to

Hans Conzelmann, these opponents may be characterized as

enthusiasts.[39] This problem is compounded by the fact that

Paul himself uses their terminology, particularly in his

second letter. Theologically, the position of these

enthusiasts would have been one of being above the world,

since they believed that their human life had already ended,

and that they were, through baptism, already transformed

into the eschaton.[40] Ethically, their position could have

been concretized into an extreme libertinism,[41] and with

their enthusiasm they could have easily liberated the

slaves. This possibility may have been the occasion of

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[39]Hans Conzelmann, Der erste Brief an die Korinther (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969), pp. 28-31; whether the opponents were gnostics or Gnostics is unclear, due in part to present ambiguity of these terms; see further Rudolf Bultmann, Primitive Christianity In Its Contemporary Setting (Cleveland: World, 1956), p. 230; Schmithals, p. 293; R. Wilson, Gnosis and the New Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), p. 52; Jack H. Wilson, "The Corinthians Who Say There Is No Resurrection of the Dead," Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft, LIX (1968), 90-107; Sasagu Arai, "Die Gegner des Paulus im 1 Korintherbrief und das Problem der Gnosis," New Testament Studies, XIX (1973), 430-437.

[40]James M. Robinson, "Kerygma and History in the New Testament," in James M. Robinson and Helmut Koester, Trajectories Through Early Christianity (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), pp. 32-34.

[41]Schmithals, pp. 218-224.

Paul's advice to the slaves in 1 Corinthians 7:20-24.[42]

Within the letter itself, this passage referring to the slaves (7:20-24) occurs in the seventh chapter which is a discussion on sexual relations. In that discussion, Paul's purpose is to combat both sexual libertinism and asceticism. In doing so, Paul himself leans toward the ascetic viewpoint (7:1, 7).[43] The passage on slavery appears in this context as an example to illustrate his principle for social conduct (7:17),[44] that is one ought to remain in the calling in which God has called him.[45] Slavery, along with his example of circumcision (7:18), are meant to indicate that social distinctions have no meaning (7:19).

The structure of this example on slavery may be delineated as follows: verse twenty is a re-statement of

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[42]Henneke Gülzow, Christentum und Sklaverei in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten (Bonn: Habelt, 1969), pp. 180-181.

[43]Bartchy, p. 248.

[44]The structure of the argument falls into an ABA pattern, with section B comprising vs. 17-23; see John J. Collins, "Chiasmus, the 'ABA' Pattern and the Text of Paul," in Studiorum Paulinorum Congressus Internationalis Catholicus 1961 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963), II, 577-578.

[45]Whether this example merely arises from the argument, perhaps as an allusion to Galatians 3:28, or is caused by the situation in Corinth is not certain. Perhaps both; cf. Gülzow, pp. 180-181; Bartchy, pp. 200-205.

the general rule expressed in 7:17;[46] in verse twenty-one,

the question is first asked whether if one were a slave when

called; immediately following is an imperative, not to

worry; then, a condition about being able to become free is

stated, and the advice is given, μᾶλλον χρῆσαι; the reasons

for the imperative in v. 21 are stated in vs. 22 and 23.

One reason is the rather Stoic-like definitions that reverse

external social positions.[47] The other reason for the

imperative is that the believer was already bought with a

price,[48] and therefore, he should not become a slave of

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[46]Κλῆσις means both social status and God's calling.
(It does not indicate ordained vocation.) Which meaning is
determinative here? Cf. Karl Ludwig Schmidt, "Καλέω," in
Kittel, III, 491-493; Bartchy, pp. 232-241; Georg Eichholz,
Die Theologie des Paulus in Umriss (Neukirchen-Vluyn:
Neukirchener Verlag, 1972), pp. 282-283; vs. Hans Lietzmann,
An die Korinther I und II (Tübingen: Mohr, 1931), p. 32;
Conzelmann, Der ersten Brief an die Korinther, p. 152.

[47]Bultmann, Primitive Christianity, p. 185;
J. N. Sevenster, Paul and Seneca (Leiden: Brill, 1961),
pp. 190-191.

[48]It has been suggested that τιμή here may corre-
spond to the purchase in sacral manumission; see Adolf
Deissmann, Light from the Ancient East (New York: Hodder
and Stoughton, 1910), pp. 330-333; Carl Schneider, Geistes-
geschichte des antiken Christentums (München: Beck, 1954),
I, 126-127. However, for Paul Christ is the price, not the
money; see Friedrich Büchsel, "Ἀγοράζω," in Kittel, I, 126-
128; Kurt Niederwimmer, Der Begriff der Freiheit im Neuen
Testament (Berlin: Töppelmann, 1966), pp. 175-176; Franz
Bömer, Untersuchungen uber die Religionen der Sklaven in
Griechenland und Rom (Mainz: Akademie der Wissenschaften
und der Literatur, 1960), II, 133f.

men.[49] The intention of the example for slaves is to advise them not to worry about their social position, for social distinctions are meaningless for the Christian.

The interpretation of the advice at the end of verse 21 has been quite divergent. The phrase may be completed with either the words τῇ δουλείᾳ or τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ.[50] Both alternatives are grammatically possible. The condition (21c) to which this advice refers is the opportunity to become free. This condition of a chance for freedom functions as an exception to his rule about remaining where one is, as do the exceptions in 7:9, 11, 15.[51] According to Bartchy and others,[52] this opportunity was probably a reference to manumission by self-purchase. Since refusal of manumission was not in a slave's control,[53] Paul advised

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[49]Possibly a prohibition against self-sale into slavery; Bartchy, pp. 75-77.

[50]For the history of interpretation, see Bartchy, pp. 9-12.

[51]Ἀλλά here has full adversive force, while εἰ καί means 'if indeed'; Bartchy, pp. 305-307.

[52]Johannes Weiss, Der erste Korintherbrief (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1925), pp. 187-188; Gülzow, pp. 177-178; Bartchy, pp. 187-208.

[53]Bartchy, pp. 177, 190.

the slaves to make use of their freedom, that is in love.[54]

In conclusion, Paul's advice to the slaves in 1 Corinthians 7:20-24 was to remain where they were. Their social position had no meaning; they were free, for they had been ransomed by Christ. However, if they had the opportunity to become free, they were to use their freedom, like any other Christian, in love for their brother.

PHILEMON AND LIBERATION

Paul's letter to Philemon was another source for discovering his relation to slavery. The occasion for this letter was the escape of a slave named Onesimus, who had fled his master Philemon and had come to Paul.[55] The

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[54]Bartchy's solution (Ibid., pp. 269-270) is to add the words, 'make use of your call,' based upon a study of χράομαι in Josephus. However, calling is not a compelling solution, as he himself reports of Glenn Bowerstock's solution of "make use of the freedom which has been granted." The literary context of the epistle points toward the proper use of freedom in love; see Eichholz, p. 282; Eduard Schweizer, "Zum Sklavenproblem im Neuen Testament," Evangelische Theologie, XXXII (1972), 504.

[55]Where Paul is located is uncertain; perhaps he is in prison, though this suggestion raises many problems, such as how did Onesimus find him there? Cf. Eduard Lohse, Colossians and Philemon (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), pp. 187-188; R. Reitzenstein, Die Hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen (Leipzig: Teubner, 1927), pp. 196, 214; Gerhard Kittel, "Αἰχμαλωτός," in his Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, I, 196-197; Hermann Hanse, "Κατέχω," in Kittel, II, 829-830.

reason why Onesimus came to Paul is not stated,[56] nor is it explained why he ran away from Philemon.[57] Moreover, no direct word is given about Onesimus's conversion.[58] Probably, as Théo Preiss has suggested, Onesimus heard about Paul in his master's household.[59] What did he hear? Did he hear about Paul's gospel of freedom and, in particular, the freedom of Galatians 3:28? Whatever the cause, Paul decided to send Onesimus back to Philemon's household. Paul's reasoning for this decision is also not clear. Against such an action was the fact that Onesimus was providing some useful service for Paul (v. 10). Moreover, Paul's training as a Jew would have suggested that sending back a run-away was not ethical.[60] Paul's motivation for

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[56]Asylum has been suggested as the cause, but it was unlikely the reason, and is not helpful in understanding the letter; Gülzow, pp. 32-36; vs. Erwin R. Goodenough, "Paul and Onesimus," Harvard Theological Review, XXII (1929), 181-183.

[57]The damages implied in Philemon 18 were not necessarily the cause; Lohse, p. 204.

[58]Lohse, (Ibid., p. 200) suggests that Onesimus was converted by Paul. However, the usual custom in antiquity was that the entire household converted at the same time. Therefore, Onesimus might have already been a Christian. See Gülzow, p. 27.

[59]Théo Preiss, Life in Christ (Chicago: Allenson, p. 35.

[60]See Strack and Billerbeck, II, 668-669; however, Galatians 3:28 has already shown that Paul in regards to slavery had broken with the Jewish law with its distinction between Jew and Greek.

returning Onesimus may be seen to have three aspects. The
first is legal. As a Roman citizen, Paul was required by
Roman law to send Onesimus back.[61] The second area is
theological. Paul advised Onesimus to return because he did
not want to infringe upon or limit Philemon's freedom.[62]
The third area is practical. Paul sent Onesimus back
because only Philemon could give him his freedom.

Now, this last possible motivation for Paul's action
has been much contested. Many scholars who have closely
observed the literal meaning of the text have rightly
opposed the thought that Paul asked for Onesimus's free-
dom.[63] Their position has been particularly critical of

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[61]Paul Robinson Coleman-Norton, "The Apostle Paul
and the Roman Law of Slavery," in his Studies in Roman
Economic and Social History (Princeton: Princeton Univer-
sity Press, 1951), pp. 170-174; Heinz Bellen, Studien zur
Sklavenflucht im Römischen Kaiserreich (Wiesbaden: Steiner,
1971), p. 80; vs. William L. Westermann, The Slave Systems
of Greek and Roman Antiquity (Philadelphia: American
Philosophical Society, 1955), p. 150; Bartchy, p. 66.

[62]Lohse, p. 202; Rudolf Bultmann, "Γινώσκω," in
Kittel, I, 717.

[63]Adolf Harnack, The Mission and Expansion of
Christianity in the First Three Centuries (New York:
Putnam's Sons, 1908), I, 167; Martin Dibelius and Heinrich
Greeven, An die Kolosser, an die Epheser, an Philemon
(Tübingen: Mohr, 1953), p. 107; Edgar J. Goodspeed, "Paul
and Slavery," Journal of Bible and Religion, XXII (1929),
181-183; Gülzow, pp. 39-41; Lohse, pp. 186-203, 205-206.

scholars, such as Ernst Lohmeyer,[64] who have asserted that Paul commanded Philemon to bestow liberty.[65] However, as P. N. Harrison has suggested, "What is often overlooked in this letter is the writing between the lines."[66] It was this "writing between the lines" that has suggested to some commentators that the letter hints at emancipation.[67] What evidence is there in the text that indicates that Paul was saying more than the individual meaning his words and that he was arguing for Onesimus's liberation?

The initial piece of evidence is the structure of the letter itself. The major portion of the epistle, which is similar to the Greek private letter, is devoted to a plea that is unusually long and ambiguous. The ambiguity may be explained as possibly a deliberate action by Paul to

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[64]Ernst Lohmeyer, Der Briefe an die Philipper, an die Kolosser, und an Philemon (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), pp. 190-191.

[65]Preiss, p. 36, has suggested and Lohse, pp. 203, 205-206, has shown that Paul did not order Onesimus's freedom.

[66]P. N. Harrison, "Onesimus and Philemon," Anglican Theological Review, XXXII (1950), 270.

[67]J. B. Lightfoot, St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon (New York: Macmillan, 1890), p. 321; Marvin R. Vincent, The Epistles to the Philippians and Philemon (Edinburgh: Clark, 1897), p. 191; E. F. Scott, The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians (New York: Harper & Bros., 1930), p. 113; John Knox, Philemon Among the Letters of Paul (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1959), p. 30; P. N. Harrison, p. 30; Bellen, p. 80.

emphasize that the decision about Onesimus was Philemon's.[68] The length might be due to a deliberate move by Paul to indicate the importance of the plea. Moreover, there is a thanksgiving in vs. 4-6 in which Paul employed a joy formula that was the basis for his plea.[69] This form may have here a parenetic function in that it supports the imperatives in the body.[70] Furthermore, there is the function of the announcement of a future visit (v. 22). Though common in Hellenistic closings,[71] it serves here as a check upon Philemon's future actions in regard to Onesimus.[72] Finally, there is the promissory note in vs. 18-19 by Paul to pay any damages that Onesimus might have caused.[73] It shows that Paul was siding with the slave, even to the point of financial support.[74] The structure of the letter, then,

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[68]John L. White, "The Structural Analysis of Philemon: A Point of Departure in the Formal Analysis of the Pauline Letters," 179th Annual Meeting Seminar Papers, Society of Biblical Literature (1971), pp. 35-37.

[69]Ibid., pp. 34-35.

[70]Why can a form not have two functions? Victor Paul Furnish, Theology and Ethics in Paul (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), pp. 94-95; vs. William G. Doty, Letters in Primitive Christianity (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), pp. 32-33.

[71]White, pp. 38-45.

[72]Robert W. Funk, Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), pp. 264-265.

[73]Deissmann, p. 335.

[74]It is not figurative; vs. Lohse, p. 205.

points to the fact that Paul was attempting to say more than just what his individual words said.

In the text, Paul left several obvious hints to Philemon that he was attempting to influence Philemon's decision in the direction of Onesimus's freedom. The first set of evidence is the use of certain terms. The function of ἀγαπητός in v. 1 was to remind Philemon that he was a member of the community of love. This reminder was to indicate to Philemon that his actions were guided by this fruit of the Spirit.[75] Next, the use of the ambiguous term, πρεσβύτης, in v. 9 to describe himself may be a deliberate reference by Paul to his apostolic authority.[76] As such, this reference may be adding legitimacy to Paul's request. Finally, there is the use of the strong term, τὰ σπλάγχυα, in vs. 7, 12, 20. It functions in v. 12, ". . . as if Paul, in the run-away slave, came to Philemon in person . . ."[77] This identification and representation of the apostle himself with the slave is stated directly in the appeal in v. 17.[78] Would Philemon refuse mercy and freedom to Paul? These terms, then, show that Paul was not a disinterested

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[75]Lohse, p. 189.

[76]It may mean either 'old man' or 'ambassador'; see Günther Bornkamm, "Πρεσβύτης," in Kittel, VI, 683.

[77]Helmut Koester, "Επλάγχυον," in Kittel, VII, 555.

[78]Preiss, p. 36f.

observor, but actually tried to weight heavily his argument in favor of Onesimus.[79]

A second set of evidence in the text demonstrates that Paul was indicating Onesimus's liberation. This is in the argument in vs. 15-16. First, there is the suggestion that the whole situation of Onesimus's escape was divinely caused (v. 15a). Surely, God's intervention was not just to secure a kind reception. Next, the reason for the escape is stated; ". . . that you might have him back forever, not as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother . . ." (vs. 15-16). Paul clearly showed that he did not think that Onesimus should be a slave for life.[80] Then, it is added that this new relationship between Philemon and Onesimus in brotherhood was "in the flesh and in the Lord." "In the flesh" meant that Onesimus was a brother as a man.[81] This definition of Omesimus as a person destroyed his slave status.[82]

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[79]Bellen's solution (p. 80) with his use of ἀγαθός as meaning liberation (Philo, Spec. Leg. ii. 84) is unlikely. Paul usually uses the term ethically in the sense of right action, that is love; Furnish, pp. 199-203.

[80]Lohse, pp. 202-204; Knox, p. 27; C. F. D. Moule, The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and to Philemon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 146-147.

[81]Preiss, p. 40.

[82]Perhaps he became the Bishop of Ephesus who had the same name; see Lohse, p. 186.

In conclusion, Paul, in a masterpiece of tact and diplomacy, tried to get Philemon to release his slave Onesimus. Whether he was successful or not is unknown.[83] What is clear from the letter is that for Paul liberation was not an absolute consequence of his gospel. Salvation did not always or necessarily mean freedom for slaves. In this sense, Paul's argument in Philemon is consistent with his advice to the slaves in Corinth. However, in Philemon Paul does not only posit the possibility of becoming free as in 1 Corinthians 7:20-24 but actually involves himself in the attempt to create that possibility. When faced with the extreme libertinism of the Corinthians, he favored order over the anarchy of the Corinthian enthusiasts. In contrast, in Philemon Paul re-takes the radical stance of Galatians 3:28.

In summary, then, it may be stated that Paul provided for the early church a possibility for Christian liberation from slavery. This possibility entered Christianity before Paul from the liberation trajectory in Hellenistic culture. This trajectory received a new distinction, namely freedom in Christ. For Paul, this new distinguishing characteristic was not merely a name-change, but one that carried with it a new self-understanding of

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[83]Perhaps he became the Bishop of Ephesus who had the same name; see Lohse, p. 186.

existence, that the believer was a son of God (Galatians
4:1-10; Romans 8:12-16). This new self-understanding was
made possible by Christ and was revealed to the believers
in the Spirit. This act of ecstatic inspiration imparted
to the believers freedom. This freedom had a social
dimension, as may be seen from Galatians 3:28, 1 Corin-
thians 7:20-24, and Philemon. In Galatians 3:28, the
distinction of "slave" was radically abolished. In
1 Corinthians 7:20-24, Paul advised the slaves to make use
of their freedom if they were given that opportunity. In
Philemon, Paul pleaded for the freedom of Onesimus.

Chapter 4

LIBERATION IN THE EARLY CHURCH

With the introduction of the possibility of
Christian liberation from slavery by Paul, the early church
was confronted with a social alternative, for which it was
unduly suited. The church was generally in the very begin-
ning an urban movement. As such, it reached across various
economic and social classes.[1] Its main source of strength
was the conversion of the household unit in toto. In
antiquity, the household was the basic social unit which
was held together by a common religion. Whatever the head
of the household believed, so did the rest of the home.
Consequently, when a household became Christian, so did its
slaves.[2] In fact, Christian slaves apart from the household
were a rare phenomenon.[3] In this setting, liberation was
severely limited, since the ancient household could not

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[1]It was not a slave religion; see E. A. Judge, The
Social Patterns of the Christian Groups in the First
Century (London: Tyndale Press, 1960), pp. 60-61; Carl
Schneider, Geistesgeschichte des antiken Christentums
(München: Beck, 1954), I, 616, 736-737.

[2]Judge, pp. 30-39; Hans Conzelmann, The History of
Primitive Christianity (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973),
pp. 107-108.

[3]Henneke Gülzow, Christentum und Sklaverei in den
ersten drei Jahrhunderten (Bonn: Habelt, 1969), p. 27;
later, Celsus accuses Christians of purposely evangelizing
slaves; Origen, Contra Celsum iii. 52.

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function without slaves or serfs of some kind. Therefore, there resulted little criticism of the institution of slavery as a whole from the Pauline possibility of liberation.[4]

Despite this rather gloomy prospect for liberation, freedom for Christian slaves became a reality. One place this freedom was actualized was within the community of faith itself. There the slave was considered a brother in Christ. The impact of Galatians 3:28 was equality in the community as was attested by many church fathers.[5] For example is this passage from Lactantius, Inst. v. 16: ". . . yet slaves are not slaves to us; we deem them brothers after the Spirit, and fellow-servants in religion."[6] Even in funeral epitaphs, this equality in Christ was maintained, for the word slave is missing from them.[7] If Christian slaves became martyrs, they were

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[4]Adolf Harnack, The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1908), I, 167; Ernst Troeltsch, The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches (London: Allen and Unwin, 1931), I, 132-133; Rudolf Bultmann, The Theology of the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), II, 230-231.

[5]See Harnack, I, 168; Leonard D. Agate, "Slavery (Christian)," in James Hastings (ed.) Encyclopedia for Religion and Ethics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), XI, 602-604; Schneider, I, 741.

[6]Harnack, I, 168.

[7]Ibid.

honored like anyone else who did.[8] As the need for a clergy
arose, slaves were not excluded from this office.[9] In fact,
some such as Callistus and Pius became bishops.[10] Given
this dissolution of the social barrier between slave and
free within the church, the question arises; did this free-
dom in the community extend into the society at large?

FREEDOM AS AN ETHICAL PROBLEM

In the first century, A.D., this new freedom in
Christ realized in the community presented itself as a
problem for the early church with respect to slaves.
Possibly, some slaves thought ". . . that their social
position was incompatible with their freedom in Christ."[11]
That this situation existed may be seen as the cause for a
group of Christian ethical exhortations that stressed the
obedience of Christian slaves to their masters (Colossians
3:22-25; Ephesians 6:5-8; 1 Timothy 6:1-2; Titus 2:9-10;
1 Peter 2:18-22; D. iv. 11; B. xix. 7). In Colossians
3:22-25, slaves were exhorted to obey their masters in all

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[8]Ibid.

[9]80th Cannon of Elvira; Harnack, I, 168-169.

[10]Harnack, I, 168-169; Gülzow, pp. 144-146.

[11]James E. Crouch, The Origin and Intention of the
Colossian Haustafel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht,
1972), p. 124; see also Heinrich Schlier, Der Brief an die
Epheser (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1958), p. 284.

things. The reasons given for this behavior are fear of the Lord, and concern about reward or punishment in the eschaton.[12] In Ephesians 6:5-8, the social position of slaves was connected with 'slaves of Christ,' contrary to the paradox of 1 Corinthians 7:22.[13] In 1 Timothy 6:1-2, slaves are admonished to respect their masters so that the name of God and his teaching are not blasphemed. In a similar manner in Titus 2:9-10 slaves were instructed to be obedient in order to show that they were faithful and worthy, and a credit to the teaching of their God.[14] According to 1 Peter 2:18-22, slaves were to be obedient, even unto harsh masters.[15] They were to suffer in imitation of Christ.[16] In Didache iv. 11, slaves were to be subject to their masters who were images of God that commanded

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[12]Eduard Lohse, Colossians and Philemon (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), pp. 159-162.

[13]Schlier, pp. 283-289.

[14]Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, The Pastoral Epistles (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), pp. 5-7, 82, 141.

[15]Hans Windisch, Die Katholischen Briefe (Tübingen: Mohr, 1951), pp. 64-65; vs. Bo Reicke, The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude (Garden City: Doubleday, 1964), pp. 98-100.

[16]Hans Dieter Betz, Nachfolge und Nachahmung Jesu Christi im Neuen Testament (Tübingen: Mohr, 1967), pp. 181-182; vs. Leonhard Goppelt, "Prinzipien neutestamentlicher Sozialethik nach dem 1 Petrusbrief," in Neues Testament und Geschichte (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1972), pp. 285-296.

reverence and fear. In a similar way, Barnabas xix. 7 exhorted obedience of slaves to their masters who were images of God that demanded modesty and fear.

Most of these injunctions are contained within a specific framework of household duties, known scholarly as the Haustafeln.[17] This carefully constructed form detailed the practical rules that governed the ancient household. The Christian Haustafeln have parallels in Stoicism and Hellenistic Judaism.[18] Which setting was determinative in the establishment of the Christian version is a question beyond the scope of this study.[19] It is clear, though, that the Christian Haustafeln were not entirely a Christian invention but were formulated from sources within the Hellenistic culture.[20] Ethically, the Christian Haustafeln were aimed at preserving the status quo of the order of society in the household and accomplished this purpose by

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[17]Col. 3:18-4:1; Eph. 5:22-6:9; 1 Ti. 2:8-15; 6:1-2; Tit. 2:1-10; 1 Pt. 2:13-3:7; D. iv. 9-11; B. xix. 5-7; 1 Cl. xxi. 6-9; Pol. Phil. iv. 2-vi. 3.

[18]Slave-obedience parallels are found in Seneca, Epistle xciv. 1; Ps.-Plutarch, De Libris Educandis x; Philo, De Decalogo 167; Sibylline Oracles ii. 278; and Aboth i. 3; see Crouch, pp. 70-71, 117.

[19]See Crouch, pp. 9-36.

[20]Cf. Martin Dibelius and Heinrich Greeven, An die Kolosser, an die Epheser, an Philemon (Tübingen: Mohr, 1953), p. 47.

defining actions as fitting and proper.[21]

The Christian <u>Haustafeln</u>, then, represented a reaction against liberation of slaves. The length of the exhortation to slaves in Colossians 3:22-25 suggests that perhaps this slave problem was very acute for the early church.[22] How could the possibility of liberation have been conceived by slaves? Crouch poses three suggestions.[23] First, there was the practice of Greek sacral manumission. The similarity between the Delphic practice and the Pauline gospel of freedom could have been 'misunderstood' by the slaves. Second, Jewish manumission was connected with conversion. Perhaps Christian slaves thought that being a proselyte in Judaism was the same as becoming a Christian. Third, the freedom of enthusiasm could have extended to the liberation of slaves. All these suggestions by Crouch strengthen the possibility that Christian slaves were looking for their freedom, because the Pauline gospel that they had received permitted it. That gospel was in conflict

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[21]Whether obedience to Christ was the theological rationale for this ethic is not certain. It is not indicated in all the sources; cf. Crouch, pp. 153-155; vs. Heinz-Dietrich Wendland, "Zur sozialethischen Bedeutung der neutestamentlicher Haustafeln," <u>Botschaft an die soziale Welt</u> (Hamburg: Furche, 1959), 104-114; Lohse, pp. 154-155.

[22]Paul Robinson Coleman-Norton, "The Apostle Paul and the Roman Law of Slavery," in his <u>Studies in Roman Economic and Social History</u> (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), p. 164; Crouch, p. 150.

[23]Crouch, pp. 126-129, 150-151.

with the theology and ethics of the gospel proclaimed by
the Haustafeln.

MANUMISSION AND THE CHURCH

Not only slaves seemed to have 'misunderstood'
Christian freedom, but also certain individuals and congre-
gations within the church, for manumission became a Chris-
tian practice. When and who actually began practicing this
act is uncertain. However, it is certain that such practice
was taking place (Tertullian, De res. mort. lxvii. 12).[24]
Harnack has speculated that individual manumission of
Christian slaves was probably seen as a "praise-worthy"
act.[25] In fact, in order for a slave like Callistus to
have become bishop, he had to have been manumitted. There-
fore, it may be assumed that individual manumission of
Christian slaves was a practice in the early church.

The most common way this practice was carried out
by congregations was through the ransoming of slaves by the
community. This action may be seen in the texts;
Ig. Poly. iv. 3; 1 Cl. lv. 2; Her. Man. viii. 7-10;
Sim. i. 8. Ignatius advised:

> Do not be haughty to slaves, either men or women;
> yet do not let them be puffed up, but let them rather
> endure slavery to the glory of God, that they may

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[24]Gülzow, p. 104.

[25]Harnack, I, 170.

attain a better freedom from God. Let them not desire to be free at the church's expense, that they be not found slaves of lust.[26]

His objection was that not only were some congregations ransoming slaves by the use of church collections,[27] but that slaves had actually demanded that the funds be used in this way.[28] Ignatius was obviously not in agreement with this practice. His understanding of Christian freedom was probably at odds with Galatians 3:28. His advice in this passage was very similar to that of the Haustafeln.[29]

Other evidence that manumission through ransoming was an early practice of the church is contained in the first letter of Clement and the writings of Hermas, who was a slave himself.[30] The author of 1 Cl. described the following picture of the Roman congregation:[31]

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[26]Ignatius, Ad Polycarp iv. 3, in Kirsopp Lake (trans.) Apostolic Fathers (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913), I, 273.

[27]Harnack, I, 170.

[28]Schneider, I, 741.

[29]Cf. "The Epistles of Ignatius," in Robert M. Grant (ed.) The Apostolic Fathers (New York: Nelson, 1966), IV, 133.

[30]Robert M. Grant, Augustus to Constantine (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 270.

[31]First and Second Clement, in Grant, The Apostolic Fathers, II, 87.

> We know that many among ourselves have given them-
> selves to bondage that they might ransom others.[32]

It is possible that the term εἰς δεσμά in the Greek text

refers to an imprisonment due to financial collapse, but, at

any rate, this ransoming of others probably refers to the

manumission of slaves. Hermas encouraged and demanded the

redemption of the 'servants of God' and the purchase of

'afflicted souls.'

> But now hear the things from which you must not
> refrain but do them . . . . Next hear the things which
> follow: . . to redeem from distress the servants of
> God . . .[33]

> Therefore, instead of lands, purchase afflicted
> souls as each is able . . .[34]

Probably these actions were also indications of manumission

of Christian slaves.

Ransoming, then, was a common practice among some

congregations in the early church for manumitting slaves.

In form it was similar to that of the Greek _eranoi_, from

which it may have been adapted.[35] The church's position

that this should be a Christian practice was perhaps

influenced by a segment of Pauline Christianity which

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[32]1 Cl. lv. 2; in Lake, I, 103.

[33]Hermas, _Mandates_ vii. 7-10; in Lake, II, 105.

[34]Hermas, _Similitudes_ i. 8; in Lake, II, 141.

[35]S. Scott Bartchy, "ΜΑΛΛΟΝ ΧΡΗΣΑΙ: First Century
Slavery and the Interpretation of 1 Cor. 7:21" (Unpublished
Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1971), pp. 169-171.

recognized the Pauline possibility of liberation.

After the first century, manumission was continued as a practice in the church sporadically. Constantine himself contributed to the practice in 316 A.D. by extending the legal definition of manumission to include those liberated in the presence of the church.[36] In fact, part of the reasoning of his mandate for such an action was based upon his assumption that this practice was already a part of the life of the church. Later, both John Chrysostom and Gregory of Nazianzus thought that it would only be a short time until all Christian slaves were free.[37]

EMANCIPATION

Unfortunately, Chrysostom's and Gregory's prediction did not prove to be accurate.[38] Christianity did not emancipate the slaves. Given its basic social structure of the household and the very nature of ancient slavery, this failure is not surprising. However, Christianity did

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[36]"The Mandate of Constantine I on Manumission in the Church," in Paul Robinson Coleman-Norton, Roman State and Roman Church. A Collection of Legal Documents to A.D. 535 (London: S.P.C.K., 1966), I, 72-73.

[37]J. Chrys. Hom. Mt. lxiii. 4; Hom. 1 Cor. xl; Greg. Naz. Poems, ii. 26; Schneider, I, 741.

[38]For a brief history, see H. D. Wendland, "Sklaverei," in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart (Tübingen: Mohr, 1957), VI, 101-104; D. Nestle, "Freiheit," in Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1941), VIII, 295-297.

contain within itself some movements that saw a relationship between the gospel of freedom and liberation from slavery.

One of these movements was the urban, monastic community of Eustathius in Armenia during the middle of the fourth century.[39] According to the Synodical letter of Gangra, Eustathius and his followers were encouraging slaves to run-away and giving them shelter as monks. This practice was condemned in the third canon of the council. The synod reasoned that this action by Eustathius ran counter to the injunctions of 1 Timothy 6:1f and Titus 2:9f.[40] Importantly, Eustathius's ethics was characterized by hyper-asceticism which in matters of both slavery and women appeared similar in form to that of the Corinthian enthusiasts. As a result, it seems possible that this sheltering of run-aways was related to an enthusiastic context.

Another example of Christian liberation of slaves occurred in North Africa in the middle of the fourth century. This action was taken by the circumcellions, the fanatic guerrilla bands that were associated with the

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[39]Heinz Bellen, Studien zur Sklaven-flucht im Römischen Kaiserreich (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1971), p. 81.

[40]Charles Joseph Hefele, A History of the Councils of the Church (Edinburgh: Clark, 1896), II, 325-329.

Donatist movement.[41] These marauders roamed the country-
side, lived off the land, and fought to redeem injustices.
They protected run-away slaves, and often interceded in
master-slave relationships by reversing the social roles.
Most importantly, the <u>circumcellions</u> were religious fanatics
that had ascetic and communal practices.[42] Again, a
possible relationship between their actions regarding slaves
and enthusiasm might be present.

There is a rather large time gap between the Pauline
understanding of liberation and these extra-legal means of
emancipation in the fourth century. Except for examples of
manumission by Christian masters or by the church itself
through ransoming, there are no known evidences of Christian
liberation. In fact, this time gap also occurs between the
last known indication of ransoming in the Hermas texts of
the early second century and the decree of Constantine
extending manumission in 316. Where did the Christian
trajectory of liberation go? Did it disappear?

It seems probable that it survived underground in
so-called heretical circles. One of these circles was that

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[41]Arnold Hugh Martin Jones, <u>Were Ancient Heresies
Disguised Social Movements?</u> (Philadelphia: Fortress Press,
1966), pp. 26-27.

[42]W. H. C. Frend, <u>The Donatist Church</u> (Oxford:
Clarendon Press, 1952), pp. 172-174; Ramsay MacMullen,
<u>Enemies of the Roman Order</u> (Cambridge: Harvard University
Press, 1966), pp. 26-27.

of Marcion in the second century. Marcion was the preserver of Pauline Christianity in this period. With the delay of the _parousia_ and the ascendency to power of the Christianity represented by the _Haustafeln_, Pauline freedom, along with Paul himself, lost influence.[43] Marcion was in conflict with this trend. He believed in a radical God that upset the whole natural order of creation in a revolutionary way.[44] For him, salvation meant freedom.[45] According to one of the Marcionite Antitheses reconstructed by Harnack, ". . . Christ was commissioned by God to liberate all mankind."[46] It seems highly possible that for this man who believed in a God that upset the natural order, with a salvation that was freedom, and in a Christ who was instructed to liberate mankind, liberation of slaves was part of his gospel. This hypothesis is even more strengthened by the fact that it was Marcion who preserved the letter to Philemon.[47]

In the third century, the heretical circle that

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[43]Bultmann, II, 113-116, 205.

[44]Origen, _Contra Celsum_ vi. 53.

[45]Hans Jonas, _The Gnostic Religion_ (Poston: Beacon Press, 1963), pp. 139-140.

[46]Adolf Harnack, "Antitheses," in Wayne A. Meeks, _The Writings of St. Paul_ (New York: Norton, 1972), p. 190.

[47]Lohse, p. 188.

preserved the trajectory of liberation within Christianity
was Edessean Christianity. It is possible that the Pauline
gospel of freedom was transmitted to that community through
the influence of Marcionite Christianity.[48] In the Edessean
Acts of Thomas, the possibility of Christian liberation
resurfaces.[49] Its form this time is that of a story in
which Thomas confronts a woman named Mygdonia by preaching
to her servants that they are equal in status with all
persons before God. The possible allusion here to
Galatians 3:28 is apparent.[50] Perhaps, another influence
that brought about this passage was that sacral manumission
was being practiced in Edessa during this period.[51]

Emancipation was, then, a practice preserved and
actualized only within a few heretical circles. These
groups were usually ascetic in character. This

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[48]Walter Bauer, Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest
Christianity (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), pp. 28-
29; Barbara Ehlers, "Kann das Thomasevangelium aus Edessa
stammen?," Novum Testamentum, XII (1970), 284-317; vs.
Helmut Koester, "GNOMAI DIAPHOROI: The Origin and Nature of
Diversification in the History of Early Christianity," in
James M. Robinson and Helmut Koester, Trajectories Through
Early Christianity (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971),
pp. 126-129.

[49]Acts of Thomas 82-83.

[50]A. F. J. Klijn, The Acts of Thomas (Leiden:
Brill, 1962), p. 264.

[51]A. Cameron, "Inscriptions Relating to Sacral
Manumission and Confession," Harvard Theological Review,
XXXII (1939), 143-153.

other-worldliness was a radical protest against the conditions of this world. Within this context, liberation from slavery for all Christian slaves became a possibility if not a reality.

In conclusion, the Pauline possibility of liberation from slavery was not completely forgotten or ignored within the early church. In spite of the very social structure of the church, Christian freedom as liberation from slavery again and again broke out into the open. It was a part of the gospel of freedom for Christian slaves to whom the Haustafeln were addressed. It was evidenced in the practice of manumission by both Christian masters and some congregations who ransomed slaves. It was also preserved as a possibility and a reality within certain heretical circles.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

Liberation from slavery was a trajectory that could be traced in antiquity. It began in Hellenic culture where the very definition of slave and free was debated and challenged by the Sophists. It was protected and preserved by religion in the right of temple asylum for run-aways and in the equality of certain cults and associations. In form, this trajectory took three practical shapes; revolt, escape, and manumission. Of these, manumission was the most important and most frequent. In this, religion functioned through the liberation of slaves through sacral manumission.

The trajectory of liberation was adopted by Paul through the primitive Christian saying of Galatians 3:28. Paul did not merely Christianize the trajectory, but gave it new power and impetus, a new self-understanding of existence. This understanding was a gift of the Spirit that revealed to the believers that they were eschatologically free. This freedom had a social dimension, as is evidenced in the freedom of Galatians 3:28, in the advice to the slaves in 1 Corinthians 7:21, and in the liberation of one particular slave in the argument of Philemon. This social

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freedom did not occur automatically or necessarily as a result of the Gospel. Yet, in the Spirit there was the possibility of Christian liberation from slavery.

This Pauline possibility of liberation was not ignored or forgotten in the early church, despite its social structure. Freedom was maintained within the Christian community, where a slave was fully a brother in Christ. It was seized by Christian slaves against whom the obedience of the household rules were directed. Moreover, liberation was practiced through the manumission of Christian slaves by both Christian masters and congregations. Furthermore, the Pauline possibility of liberation probably motivated the movements toward emancipation within certain heretical circles.

HERMENEUTIC

What is the meaning of this early Christian movement of liberation from slavery for modern social ethics? In order to answer that question, attention must focus upon hermeneutic. Since hermeneutic is the process of interpreting meaning from one culture to another,[1] what one understands the present culture to be has also to be explained. Gerhard Ebeling has defined Western industrial culture as

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[1] James M. Robinson, "Hermeneutic Since Barth," in James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr. (eds.) New Frontiers in Theology (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), II, 4.

one characterized by a godlessness that has resulted from the de-anthropomorphism of God and the terror of events in recent history such as Auschwitz and Vietnam.[2] Ethically, this godlessness has preceded together with an emancipation of ethics from theology.[3] The ethical situation which has arisen is one that is plagued by a relativity of values, which, in turn, has led to a subjective or technological determination of criteria for ethical decisions.[4] As a result, there has appeared a tendency to emancipate oneself from ethics altogether.[5]

This situation has produced not only difficulties for any Biblical hermeneutic but for the whole relationship of theology and ethics. Ebeling has suggested that this crisis may be met by discovering the demands that are evident in the ethical situation itself. According to him, there are in the situation four compulsions or demands: the demand to act, to surrender, to put right, and to render account. He suggests that the demands to put right and

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[2]Gerhard Ebeling, God and Word (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), pp. 1-15.

[3]Gerhard Ebeling, "Theology and the Evidentness of the Ethical," Journal for Theology and the Church, II (1965), 90-102.

[4]Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Die Krisis des Ethischen und die Theologie," Theologische Literaturzeitung, LXXXVII (1962), 11-12.

[5]Ebeling, "Theology and the Evidentness of the Ethical," pp. 102-103.

render account points one from the ethical situation to
theology upon reflection. The love from freedom that opens
up freedom enables one to meet the demand to put right, and
the word event of God in co-humanity enables one to meet
the demand to render account.[6] Wolfhart Pannenberg has
criticized Ebeling for this solution. He maintains that
Ebeling is just continuing the crisis himself with talk
about an 'evidentness' of the ethical. Pannenberg does not
think that co-humanity is a 'given' for all persons. It,
like the demands themselves, have to be discovered.
According to him, this discovery takes place only through
the perspective of a set of values. This set of values is
that characterized by love, which the Christian brings to
the situation from his or her tradition.[7]

This discussion on ethical methodology appears
caught in the trap of the culture itself. On the one hand,
Pannenberg is correct in saying that since Nietzsche there
is no 'evidentness' of the ethical. One discovers those
demands only from a certain value perspective. On the other
hand, Ebeling is right in arguing against Pannenberg that at
the present time there is no metaphysic or history of
existence that can demonstrate convincingly to all persons

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[6]Ibid., pp. 105-122.

[7]Pannenberg, "Die Krisis des Ethischen und
Theologie," 11-14.

the universal significance of Christian values for ethics. At best, one may appeal to a 'co-humanity.'[8] Therefore one is at present left with the definition of Christian ethics as presented in the introduction of this essay. From this perspective, this conclusion means that Christian freedom is a value that is brought to the ethical situation by the Christian. It is convincing as an argument mostly to Christians.

This study, however, has shown that there are, at least, two understandings of Christian freedom in relation to slavery: Paul's and the <u>Haustafeln</u>. Which should be the basis for determining the content of Christian freedom? In order to make such a decision, some outside criterion is needed. That criterion is the Jesus of history.[9] Assuming that this person is historically accessible, at least with regards to his message, then the question of liberation returns to him. Yet, in the introductory chapter, it was argued that his cultural understanding of the relation of freedom and slavery was not directly known. What is known, though, is his theological proclamation of the Kingdom of God, and through it Jesus as a criterion may be employed.

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[8]See further; Wolfhart Pannenberg and Gerhard Ebeling, "Ein Briefwechsel," <u>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</u>, LXX (1973), 448-473.

[9]Ernst Käsemann, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus," in his <u>Essays on New Testament Themes</u> (London: SCM Press, 1964), pp. 15-47.

It is known that in his preaching Kingdom of God included in its domain the outcasts of Palestinian society: tax-collectors, adulterers, and prostitutes. This is demonstrated in his acted parable of the table-fellowship.[10] Moreover, it is witnessed in his proclamation of the present blessedness of the poor and hungry in Matthew 5:1-11/Luke 6:20-21. Paul's social dimension of Christian freedom that affects the social status of persons in society is more in line with this aspect of the Jesus of history than the Haustafeln which were bounded by what was fitting.[11]

In the introductory chapter, it was stated that the connection between the past and the present was to be understood in terms of 'understanding of world.' This connection, however, has for the scope of this study three major problems. The first is the eschatological perspective of Paul which expected the near end of the world. On the one hand, simply correcting the timetable will not solve the problem, as Siegfried Schulz has suggested.[12] Eschatology, no matter in what form, is not within a modern

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[10]Norman Perrin, Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 102-108.

[11]Cf. James E. Crouch, The Origin and Intention of the Colossian Haustafel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972), p. 158.

[12]Siegfried Schulz, "Hat Christus die Sklaven befreit? Sklaverei und Emanzipationbewegungen," Evangelische Kommentare, V (1972), 17.

understanding. On the other hand, simply dismissing
eschatology is to lose something very distinctive about
Christian theology, namely hope.[13] A possible solution to
this problem is found in the ontologizing of eschatology
itself.[14] The eschaton is not in the historical dimension
of life, but is beyond history in the very essence of
existence. As such, it constitutes the true reality of the
world.[15] In the historical dimension, the eschaton may
function as 'utopia.'[16] It confronts the partial structures
of existence with their fulfillment in the true reality.

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[13]James M. Robinson, "The Hermeneutic of Hope,"
Continuum, VI (1970), 525-534.

[14]James M. Robinson, "Die Zukunft der neutestament-
lichen Theologie," in Hans Dieter Betz and Luise Schottroff
(eds.) Neues Testament und Christliche Existenz (Tübingen:
Mohr, 1973), pp. 397-398. Robinson's understanding of lan-
guage is that it uncovers the hiddenness of God's reign. In
this respect, he is similar to what follows.

[15]Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: Uni-
versity of Chicago Press, 1963), III, 212-216.

[16]Utopia has been a bad word in theology since the
dialectic theologians of the 1920's. However, it should not
be completely dismissed. The critical point is to maintain
the paradox between its provisional character and its tran-
scendent quality; Paul Tillich, "The Political Meaning of
Utopia," in his Political Expectation (New York: Harper &
Row, 1971); cf. Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral
Society (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), pp. 57-
59, 77; Paul Tillich, Love, Power and Justice (New York:
Oxford University Press, 1954), pp. 61-71; Wolfhart Pannen-
berg, "The Kingdom of God and the Foundation of Ethics,"
in his Theology and the Kingdom of God (Philadelphia: West-
minster Press, 1969), pp. 118-121; Gustavo Gutiérrez, A
Theology of Liberation (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books,
1973), pp. 232-250.

Moreover, it opens up to the present hidden possibilities and becomes a power itself in transforming it.

The second problem is that Paul lived in a different political context than the one of today. He lived in the relatively ordered world of the Pax Romana, while, in contrast, today is a chaotic, inter-action of different political systems and structures. Participation in the political process and realistic hope for change were not possibilities within his world. As a result of these different contexts, there is no possibility for any simple translation of the ancient category of slave into the modern category of "oppressed." Yet, if as Victor Ehrenberg has suggested, that slavery has existed in one form or another in every culture,[17] what is the meaning of the term today? Perhaps its meaning is, as John Swomiley has defined it, any one who is limited by a social system or structure.[18] Therefore, everyone is in modern society in some way a slave of the system.

The third problem with the use of 'understanding of world' as a connection between past and present is the term, Spirit. Paul's world was filled with all kinds of spirits and demons. Today, the reality to which these descriptions

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[17]Victor Ehrenberg, The Greek State (London: Methuen, 1969), p. 35.

[18]John M. Swomiley, Jr., Liberation Ethics (New York: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 40-41.

pointed has all but disappeared from usual thought. Paul

Tillich has proposed that this concept should not be lost

and that in fact it can be regained. For him, the spirit is

understood as a dimension of life that is the unity of power

and meaning. The divine Spirit, then, would be a symbolic

description about the depth of that dimension of life, that

is God.[19]

In spite of these problems, it may be proposed on

the basis of these partial solutions an interpretation of

the Pauline possibility of liberation for today. Several

points emerge. First, there is a relation between the

indicative of salvation and the imperative for social

ethics. Freedom is not another worldly phenomenon. It has

concrete meaning right here and now, if only partially.

Second, Christian freedom is actualized by the Spirit of

God. As a result, where the Spirit is, is unpredictable

and irrepressible. This situation is not a new anarchy.

Paul himself recognized in 1 Corinthians that order does not

need to be sacrificed. Christian freedom is actualized in

love for others. Third, Christian freedom as a gift of the

Spirit confronts the present reality with its partiality.

It gives true hope for a better world that is grounded upon

the true reality, God's reign. It also works to make that

freedom part of the historical dimension. Social change,

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[19]Tillich, Systematic Theology, III, 21-25, 111-120.

then, is a consequence of the Gospel, though not automatically or necessarily. Therefore, Christian freedom has a liberating effect upon the social status of persons that is limited by the system and structure of society.

In conclusion, Christian freedom did indeed include the possibility of liberation from slavery, and this understanding has relevance for the meaning of Christian social ethics today.

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